



# Medication use during pregnancy

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## Background

It has been estimated that 90% of pregnant women take medicine sometime during their pregnancy. To prevent harmful effect caused by use of medication during pregnancy accessible evidence based information is important, but lacking.

## Objectives

To explore the use of medication, vitamins and natural products during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy along with satisfaction and usage of information sources among pregnant women. The practice of midwives and physicians to obtain and provide information about use of medication and natural products during pregnancy was also examined.

## Methods

The study was conducted at the University Hospital of Iceland in 2017. A questionnaire was submitted to pregnant women in a form of an interview following 20 weeks pregnancy ultrasound appointment. An online questionnaire was sent via e-mail to all members of the Icelandic medical association and the Icelandic midwives' association.

## Results

- About 90% of the 213 participants used medication once or more often during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy and about 10% (23) did not use any medication (figure 1).
- About 80% of the medicines belonged to safety classes A and B (figure 2).
- The most common reasons for medication use was mild pain, nasal congestion and reflux (figure 3).

- 97% of the participants used vitamins with folic acid and Vitamin D being the most common (figure 4). Only 14% of the participants did not use folic acid and low usage was associated with living in rural areas ( $p = 0.03$ ) and young age ( $p = 0.019$ ).
- Natural products were used by 14% of the participants.
- Majority of the pregnant women (81%) were satisfied with the information they received when a drug was prescribed. Their most commonly used sources of information were the internet (51%) and midwives (44%).
- Approximately 40% (82) of midwives and physicians found access to information regarding medication use during pregnancy insufficient and 50% found it difficult to interpret the information available.
- About 50% of the participants felt qualified to give advice to pregnant women about medication use but only 24% about the use of natural products.

## Conclusion

- Use of medication and supplements during pregnancy is common. Most medicines being used are safe.
- The majority takes folic acid and vitamin D.
- There is an opportunity to make improvements regarding information sources for professionals.
- Hospital pharmacists are accessible to give advice regarding medication use during pregnancy to midwives and physicians but should ideally be more accessible to pregnant women.

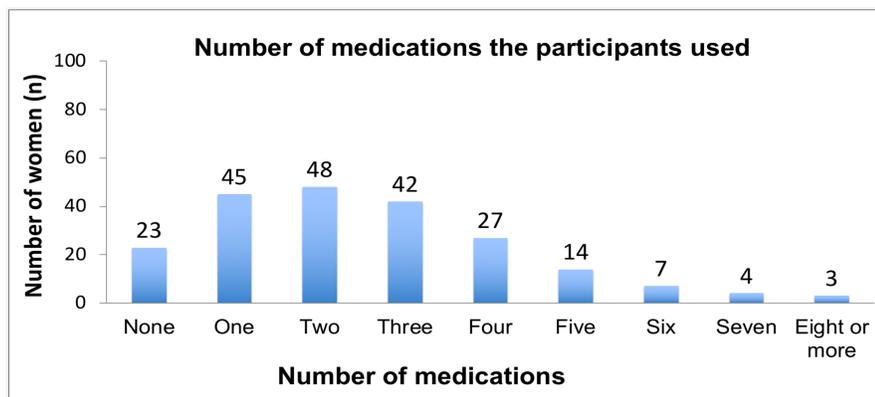


Figure 1. Number of medications used by participants.

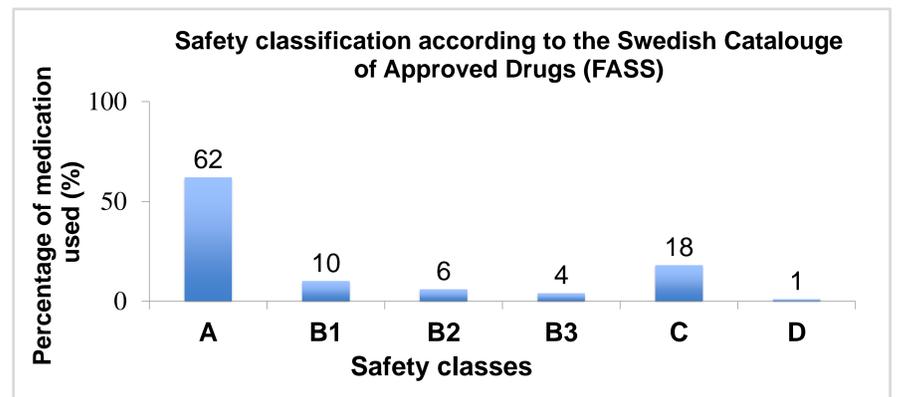


Figure 2. FASS safety classification of medications used by participants.

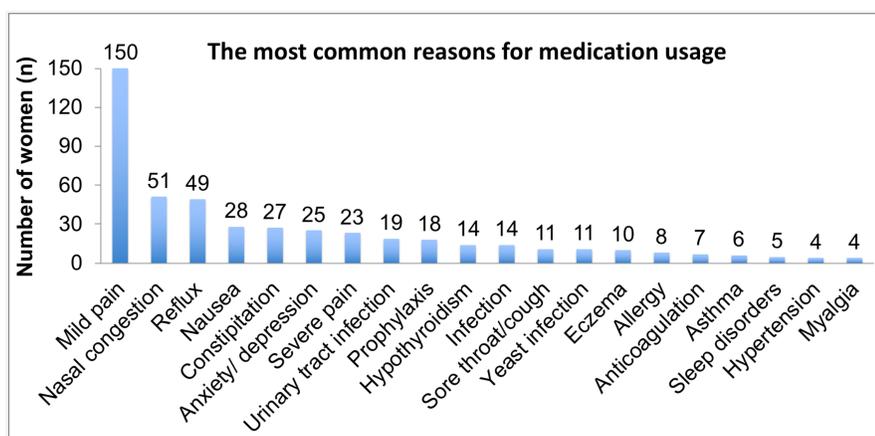


Figure 3. The most common reasons for medication usage.

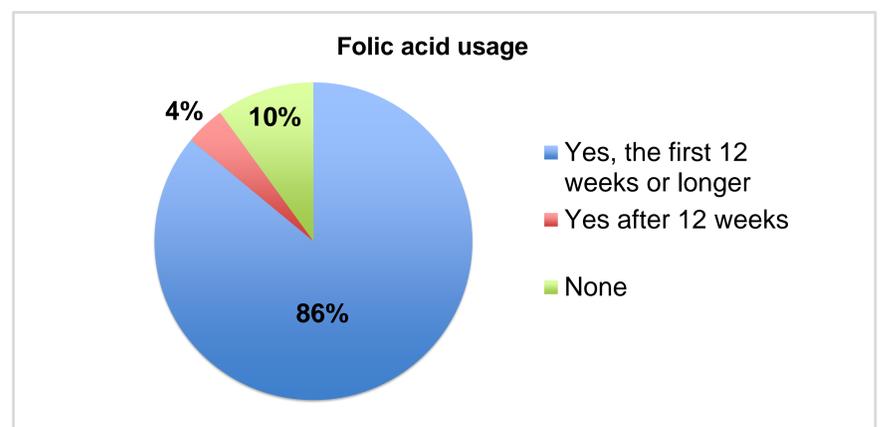


Figure 4. Folic acid used by participants.