

## Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, tasteless and odorless gas. It is released when fuels, such as wood, oil or gasoline, are not burned completely.

Mothers exposed to carbon monoxide during pregnancy pass less oxygen to their developing fetuses. A fetus also absorbs the poisonous gas from the mother. It takes longer for a fetus to get rid of carbon monoxide, so it will be poisoned for a longer time. This increases the chance for unplanned abortions, still births and birth defects.

### Staying safe:

- Install carbon monoxide detectors on every floor of your home
- Have your furnace, vents and fireplace inspected each fall by a professional
- Do not use an oven or gas stove top to heat the house
- When you run a gas powered lawn mower, make sure there is good air flow
- Never let your car run in the garage, even if the garage door is open
- Have your car's exhaust system inspected for leaks



**Please note:** Breastfeeding mothers should keep all of these poisoning concerns in mind because the toxins can pass through the mother's milk to the child.

## After the Baby Arrives

Even though it will be a while until your child is crawling, it's never too early to begin making your home safer for your child. Follow these general poison prevention tips to make your home safer from poisons:

- Keep the Illinois Poison Center number (1-800-222-1222) near each phone in your house and in other handy locations.



- Teach children to always ask first before they eat or drink anything.

Put dangerous products up high and out of the sight and reach of children. Use child safety locks on cabinets and closets.



Keep all products in their original containers with their original labels.

- Purchase products that are packaged in child-resistant containers. Remember that they are not child-proof, but do give you some added protection.
- Always close and store medicine and cleaners immediately after using them.
- Don't let your children take medicine or vitamins unsupervised.
- Never call medicine candy or make a game out of taking it.



# Your Guide to Poisoning Issues During Pregnancy



[www.IllinoisPoisonCenter.org](http://www.IllinoisPoisonCenter.org)  
1-800-222-1222

**POISON**  
**Help**  
1-800-222-1222  
ILLINOIS POISON CENTER

Whether you are planning a pregnancy or you are already pregnant, there are many poisoning issues that may affect your health and that of your baby.

Keep you and your baby safe from poisons by familiarizing yourself with the information in this brochure. Be sure to discuss any questions or concerns with your doctor, or call the Illinois Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

## Mercury

Mercury is a metal that is found in very small amounts in nature. For example, some fish may have high levels of a form of mercury called methylmercury. Eating these types of fish regularly may harm an unborn child's developing nervous system.



### Staying safe:

Nearly all fish contain very small amounts of methylmercury; these small amounts are not dangerous to humans. However, large fish that feed on other fish accumulate the highest levels of methylmercury and could be harmful to people who eat them regularly. Protect your unborn child by **not** eating these large fish, such as:

- Shark
- Swordfish
- King mackerel
- Tilefish



As long as you select a variety of other kinds of fish, you can safely enjoy eating an average of 12 ounces of fish per week as part of a healthy diet while you are pregnant.

## Alcohol

A pregnant woman who drinks alcohol risks passing the alcohol through the placenta to her baby. Because of the baby's small size and developing system, the alcohol can be more harmful to the baby than to the mother.



According to the U.S. Surgeon General:

- Alcohol consumed during pregnancy increases the risk of alcohol-related birth defects including growth problems and damage to the brain and spinal cord.
- Alcohol can damage an unborn child at any stage of pregnancy

### Staying safe:

- A pregnant woman should not drink alcohol during pregnancy

## Medicine

Some over-the-counter medicines and medicines prescribed to you by your health care provider before you became pregnant may be harmful to you and the growing fetus during pregnancy.



### Staying safe:

- Inform your health care providers that you are pregnant
- Never take any drugs during pregnancy unless told to by your doctor
- Talk to your doctor about consuming caffeine, vitamins and herbal products, which also can affect the growing fetus

## Lead



Lead is a metal that can make people sick if they breathe in dust or dirt that contains lead or eat something with lead in it (e.g., some candies from Mexico).

During pregnancy, lead in the mother's blood can pass to her unborn child through the placenta. High blood lead levels can affect the unborn child's brain, causing developmental problems later in life. Over time, lead poisoning can also damage the kidneys and stomach.

### Staying safe:

- Clean up chipped and peeling paint inside and outside your home
- Wet wipe windowsills, ledges and flat surfaces at least weekly
- Have your home checked for lead pipes and lead paint and hire experts to make necessary repairs
- Wash hands before preparing or eating food and after contact with dust or dirt
- Wash hands after touching pets (pet hair can hold lead dust)
- Eat foods high in iron, zinc and calcium, which help your body absorb less lead



Visit the Illinois Poison Center's Web site, [www.IllinoisPoisonCenter.org](http://www.IllinoisPoisonCenter.org), for more information about any of the poisoning issues listed in this brochure.

Or call 1-800-222-1222 to order fact cards or brochures regarding these poisoning topics.