



SMFM Statement on Acetaminophen Use During Pregnancy and Autism

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The Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM) continues to advise physicians and patients that acetaminophen is an appropriate medication to treat pain and fever during pregnancy.

It is important to understand that untreated fever and pain during pregnancy carry significant maternal and infant health risks. Untreated fever, particularly in the first trimester, increases the risk of miscarriage, birth defects, and premature birth, and untreated pain can lead to maternal depression, anxiety, and high blood pressure.

A thorough review of the existing research that suggests a potential link between acetaminophen use during pregnancy and an increased risk of autism and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders (ADHD) in children does not establish a causal relationship. All of the studies to date, including the most recent research, have significant methodological and design limitations and do not clearly establish the link between acetaminophen and childhood neurobehavioral issues.

“At this time, the weight of scientific evidence that acetaminophen use during pregnancy causes an increased risk for autism or ADHD is simply inconclusive,” said SMFM President Sindhu K. Srinivas, MD, MSCE. “In maternal-fetal medicine, as in all of medicine, our recommendations are based on an evaluation of rigorous research and data, clinical expertise, and our patients’ values and preferences.”

Pregnant patients can be reassured that using acetaminophen to treat pain and fever is safe.

