

Keep New Acetaminophen Pregnancy Warnings in Perspective

Pharmacy staff are asking **how to answer questions about reported links between using acetaminophen during pregnancy and autism in kids.**

FDA recently announced that acetaminophen's labeling will soon say its use in pregnancy is associated with increased risk of pediatric neurological issues...autism, ADHD, etc.

But know that this change isn't based on new, groundbreaking data.

Some past studies suggest a small increased risk of these conditions with chronic acetaminophen use (over 1 month, etc). But this risk isn't seen with short-term prn admin in pregnancy.

Be aware that results are conflicting...some studies found NO link. And most of the concerning data are from animals or limited observational human studies that only show an association...NOT causation.

Plus these studies have flaws (bias, etc) that skew data. For example, many relied on moms to recall med use from months prior.

Keep in mind that there is NO evidence that taking acetaminophen while breastfeeding increases neurological risks. Similarly, several studies failed to show a link in young kids given the med after delivery.

Anticipate your pharmacist to reassure expectant mothers that these label changes reinforce our current approach in pregnancy: it's best to use acetaminophen at the lowest dose and shortest duration necessary.

Note that FDA's statement even says acetaminophen is still the safest analgesic in pregnancy when one is needed.

For example, it's best to avoid po and topical NSAIDs (ibuprofen, diclofenac, etc) due to fetal risks...miscarriage, kidney defects, etc.

Support using a stepwise pain management approach in pregnancy, when possible...to limit systemic exposure to meds and fetal risks.

Anticipate nondrug measures up front, such as hot or cold packs, physical therapy, stretching, etc.

As a next step, you may see topicals with menthol and/or lidocaine for musculoskeletal pain...but NOT salicylate products (muscle rubs, etc), since they're absorbed and have similar risks to NSAIDs.

Expect to still see acetaminophen on labor and delivery order sets.

In pregnancy, it's best for initial acetaminophen orders to be prn with clear indications (mild to moderate pain, fever over 102°F, etc).

After delivery, anticipate most moms to get acetaminophen around the clock to help decrease the need for opioids (oxycodone, etc).

Take a deeper look at the evidence using our *Analgesics in Pregnancy and Lactation* chart that discusses benefits and risks of pain meds.

Key References:

- FDA. FDA Responds to Evidence of Possible Association Between Autism and Acetaminophen Use During Pregnancy. September 22, 2025. <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-responds-evidence-possible-association-between-autism-and-acetaminophen-use-during-pregnancy> (Accessed

Cite this document as follows: Article, Keep New Acetaminophen Pregnancy Warnings in Perspective, Hospital Pharmacy Technician's Letter, November 2025

The content of this article is provided for educational and informational purposes only, and is not a substitute for the advice, opinion or diagnosis of a trained medical professional. If your organization is interested in an enterprise subscription, email sales@trchealthcare.com.

© 2025 Therapeutic Research Center (TRC). TRC and Hospital Pharmacy Technician's Letter and the associated logo(s) are trademarks of Therapeutic Research Center. All Rights Reserved.

September 24, 2025).

- Gustavson K, Ystrom E, Ask H, et al. Acetaminophen use during pregnancy and offspring attention deficit hyperactivity disorder - a longitudinal sibling control study. *JCPP Adv.* 2021 Jun 22;1(2):e12020.
- Ahlqvist VH, Sjöqvist H, Dalman C, et al. Acetaminophen Use During Pregnancy and Children's Risk of Autism, ADHD, and Intellectual Disability. *JAMA.* 2024 Apr 9;331(14):1205-1214.
- Okubo Y, Hayakawa I, Sugitate R, Nariai H. Maternal Acetaminophen Use and Offspring's Neurodevelopmental Outcome: A Nationwide Birth Cohort Study. *Paediatr Perinat Epidemiol.* 2025 Sep 2. doi: 10.1111/ppe.70071.
- Damkier P, Gram EB, Ceulemans M, et al. Acetaminophen in Pregnancy and Attention-Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder and Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Obstet Gynecol.* 2025 Feb 1;145(2):168-176.
- Alemany S, Avella-García C, Liew Z, et al. Prenatal and postnatal exposure to acetaminophen in relation to autism spectrum and attention-deficit and hyperactivity symptoms in childhood: Meta-analysis in six European population-based cohorts. *Eur J Epidemiol.* 2021 Oct;36(10):993-1004.
- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. ACOG Affirms Safety and Benefits of Acetaminophen during Pregnancy. September 22, 2025. <https://www.acog.org/news/news-releases/2025/09/acog-affirms-safety-benefits-acetaminophen-pregnancy> (Accessed October 16, 2025).
- Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine. SMFM Statement on Acetaminophen Use During Pregnancy and Autism. September 5, 2025. <https://www.smfm.org/news/smfm-statement-on-acetaminophen-use-during-pregnancy-and-autism> (Accessed October 16, 2025).

Hospital Pharmacy Technician's Letter. November 2025, No. 411133

Cite this document as follows: Article, Keep New Acetaminophen Pregnancy Warnings in Perspective, Hospital Pharmacy Technician's Letter, November 2025

The content of this article is provided for educational and informational purposes only, and is not a substitute for the advice, opinion or diagnosis of a trained medical professional. If your organization is interested in an enterprise subscription, email sales@trchealthcare.com.

© 2025 Therapeutic Research Center (TRC). TRC and Hospital Pharmacy Technician's Letter and the associated logo(s) are trademarks of Therapeutic Research Center. All Rights Reserved.