

GYNAECOLOGY & OBSTETRICS UPDATE

Website for Doctors MarkMalak.com

Website for Patients MrMalak.com

Issue 91

April, 2010

Author

Mark Malak

MB, BCh., M.Sc.,
Ph.D., DFFP,
MRCOG, FRCOG

Lead

Urogynaecologist
East Sussex NHS
Hospitals Trust

Tel: 01323 413735

**HOSPITAL
DOCTOR**

AWARD

1st runner up

**UK best
Continence Team**

**Eastbourne
Urogynecology
Team**

M Malak, A Grimston,
J Andrews, N Lawton,
A Spirou, W Fletcher

**Integrated
management of
pelvic floor
disorders: Prolapse,
urinary incontinence
(1ry & recurrent),
frequency, urgency
and recurrent cystitis**

**NHS Clinical
Excellence**

Award

**2005 2006 2007
2008 2009**

**(achieving the highest
local Award)**

Herbal Product Use is common in Pregnancy & may pose Fetal Risks

Learning Point: The use of herbal products just before and during pregnancy is common. Little is known about the effects of herbal products on the developing foetus. The fact that a substance is natural does not necessarily mean that it is safe for the foetus. For example the US - FDA withdrew ephedra because of concerns about cardiovascular effects in adults which could have implications for the foetus. Women should, therefore, be advised to err on the side of caution and avoid herbal use.

A study of 4239 women showed that 462 mothers (10.9%) used herbal product 3 months before or during pregnancy. During pregnancy, the overall prevalence was 9.4% and was highest during the first trimester (6.9%). A substantial proportion of women took herbal products during the second (5.1%) and third (5.2%) trimesters. The use of herbal products increased with age, especially older than 30 years, and among women with higher education.

The most commonly used herbals early in pregnancy were ginger, probably because it is believed to prevent nausea and vomiting, and ephedra. Later in pregnancy, herbal teas and chamomile were most commonly used. Other commonly used herbals were cranberry extract, raspberry leaf, mint or peppermint, and primrose oil.

Herbal use during pregnancy raises concerns because:

- * Our ignorance of the potential harm to the pregnant woman is complicated by our even greater ignorance of the potential effects on fetal safety.
- * The fact that use of herbal products was greatest during the first trimester of pregnancy raises concerns about fetal safety because this is a critical period of fetal organ development
- * It is common to use herbals during pregnancy as many herbals are marketed specifically for symptoms that occur commonly during pregnancy, such as nausea and vomiting
- * It is difficult to ascertain the ingredients in herbal products with any degree of reliability.

Reference:

Am J Obstet Gynecol. Published online December 28, 2009.

Website for Doctors MarkMalak.com

Website for Patients MrMalak.com