

[IMAGE]

## Is Your Baby at Risk?

The potential for dangerous drug side-effects in infants and young children exceeds that for adults because their bodies detoxify chemicals less effectively than adults, and their body sizes range widely in these years - making correct dosages more difficult to administer. Prescribing drugs to infants or children is additionally dangerous due to a lack of testing in this age group.

In a recent study in the journal *Pediatrics*, researchers examined over 7,000 adverse drug reactions in infants under age 2, all submitted to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) between 1997 and 2000. The authors also determined whether the suspected drugs were transmitted from mother to infant during pregnancy, or if the infant was administered the drug directly.

Less than 1% of the nearly 2,000 drugs identified in the study were associated with over half of all serious or fatal side-effects. Deaths linked to side-effects were far more likely in the first few months after birth (41% in the first month). In a full quarter of cases, drugs were administered to the mother, not the infant, and then passed to the child through the womb or through breastfeeding. Included in the list of the drugs most likely to cause dangerous side-effects in children were ibuprofen and acetaminophen (drugs more commonly known by such brand names as Advil and Tylenol).

In many cases, more risky drugs may be needed to avoid even worse health emergencies. However, the authors of this study note that only about 10% of the actual total of deaths and serious complications from drugs may be reported, based on FDA data. Talk to your doctor about which drugs are safe for young children, and always exercise extreme caution when considering any type of medication for them, or administering it to yourself while pregnant - even if your doctor has approved its use.

### *Reference:*

Moore TJ, Weiss SR, et al. Reported adverse drug events in infants and children under 2 years of age. *Pediatrics* 2002;110(5), p. e53.

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