

Women suffer unnecessarily in pregnancy

Oliver Moody

Up to three quarters of pregnant women suffer in silence during minor illnesses because they wrongly fear that over-the-counter drugs could harm their unborn babies, a study has found.

Unclear advice leaves many avoiding medications such as paracetamol, sleeping pills and antihistamines even though they are perfectly safe, researchers said. They claimed that the NHS Choices website was unnecessarily vague on the matter, meaning that pregnant women tended to err on the side of caution and put up with headaches, allergies or constipation.

A third of women who had suffered urinary tract infections said that they had not asked for antibiotics despite a risk of serious complications if the condition is left unchecked.

Out of more than 1,100 women who completed an online questionnaire, 72.8 per cent said that they had deliberately not used one or more medicines during pregnancy, including paracetamol, ibuprofen and cough mixture.

Michael Twigg, of the University of East Anglia, who led the research, said: "There's no need to avoid paracetamol at all. If you've got a raging headache, it's perfectly fine to take it."

The study was published in the *International Journal of Clinical Pharmacy*.

3.6.16 Times