

TABLE 11-1

**Herb Categories to Avoid during Pregnancy**

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Abortifacients and emmenagogues	Tansy Thuja Safflower Scotch broom Rue Angelica Mugwort Wormwood Yarrow Pennyroyal essential oil
Essential oils and volatile oils*	Thuja Tansy Oregano Thyme Sage Peppermint Pennyroyal
Teratogens	<i>Lupinus</i> spp. <i>Veratrum</i> spp. <i>Conium</i> spp. <i>Solanum</i> spp. <i>Nicotiana</i> spp. <i>Ferula</i> spp. <i>Trachymene</i> spp. <i>Datura</i> <i>Prunus</i> spp. Sorghum <i>Senecio</i> spp. Comfrey Coltsfoot Borage Goldenseal Barberry Oregon grape
Stimulating laxatives	Cascara sagrada Castor oil Buckthorn Aloes Rhubarb
Phytoestrogens	Hops Red clover Isoflavone extracts
Nervous system stimulants/depressants	Ephedra Guarana Coffee Kava

*Note:* The herbs listed under each category are representative examples and are not exhaustive. Additional herbs may fall into any of these categories.

\*Avoid internal use; external use may be acceptable under the guidance of an experienced botanical medicine practitioner.

TABLE 11-2

**Commonly Used Botanicals with Possible Abortifacient, Emmenagogue, or Oxytotic Activity**

COMMON NAME	BOTANICAL NAME
Blue cohosh	<i>Caulophyllum thalictroides</i>
Coleus	<i>Coleus forskohlii</i>
Cotton root bark	<i>Gossypium</i> spp.
Eucalyptus	<i>Eucalyptus</i> spp.
Goldenseal	<i>Hydrastis canadensis</i>
Motherwort	<i>Leonurus cardiaca</i>
Mugwort	<i>Artemisia</i> spp.
Pennyroyal	<i>Mentha pulegium</i>
Tansy	<i>Tanacetum vulgare</i>
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>

was used historically to prevent miscarriage. Many herbs that are high in essential oil content are undisputed emmenagogues, although the presence of essential oils in an herb does not mean it acts as an emmenagogue.<sup>26</sup> Commonly accepted abortifacients and emmenagogic herbs include (but are not limited to) tansy, thuja, safflower, scotch broom, rue, angelica, mugwort, wormwood, yarrow, and essential oil of pennyroyal.<sup>26</sup>

**Essential Oils and Volatile Oils**

Essential oils and volatile oils are capable of crossing the placenta and reaching the fetus, and may have effects on the developing fetal nervous system. In significant doses, essential oils can be emmenagogic. Concentrated essential oils should never be taken internally during pregnancy and should not be used neat (undiluted) topically. Oils known to be specifically emmenagogic because of their essential oil content (e.g., thuja, pennyroyal, tansy) should be entirely avoided during pregnancy. Common herbs with high volatile oil content such as chamomile, lavender, spearmint, and peppermint, but which are considered generally safe during pregnancy, should be used in moderation; however, they have not been associated with adverse clinical outcomes.

**Teratogens and Mutagens**

The word *teratogen* has its origins in the Greek *terato*, meaning “monster.” Teratogens are substances that cause structural abnormalities in the fetus. The drug thalidomide was a powerful example of a teratogen, and its legacy has left an imprint on those who prescribe medications to pregnant women. There is extremely limited knowledge about which herbs are teratogenic. Most of what is known is derived primarily from animal studies, observation of teratogenesis in grazing cattle, and suspected teratogenicity in humans from ingestion of suspected harmful herbal products. Known teratogens include those plants in the *Lupinus*, *Veratrum*, *Conium*, and *Solanum* genuses; and suspected teratogenic