

Health

Pregnancy and sleeping tablets

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Q: I'm six weeks pregnant and I've had several nights in a row without sleep. I really need a nights' rest so is it safe to take sleeping tablets?

A: Most GPs prescribe nothing but paracetamol during pregnancy, but if your sleep deprivation is severe ask if there is something else for short-term help.

Brisbane gynaecologist Gino Pecoraro says Restavit, which is also used for morning sickness, is a relatively sedating antihistamine that can be useful for insomnia as a one-off measure.

"It is a category A drug which means it has been taken by a large number of pregnant women without any increase in malformations, direct and indirect adverse effects being reported," he says.

Dr Pecoraro also advises looking at other causes of sleeplessness, such as an overactive thyroid, anxiety or depression. If your sleep problems persist, don't take sleeping tablets without asking your doctor first.

Alternative therapies, such as lavender oils or remedial massage, may be useful, but are yet to be shown to be hazard free of effective in large trials.

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