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Topical Medications and Pregnancy

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The Pregnancy Healthline gets a number of inquiries regarding the safety of topically applied products during pregnancy. The products of concern vary from Retin A and corticosteroids to self-tanning, hair dyes, insect repellents, tooth paste and facial cleaners. These calls can be rather perplexing, as most of these products, as with many over-the-counter products, are not tested for the reproductive effects in humans. We must therefore rely on the principles of teratology to make a risk assessment.

The primary principle of teratology we rely on in these cases is "the dose of an agent will determine the response to that agent." The absorbency rate of topically applied medications is typically very low, so exposure to the fetus would be expected to be none to minimal in most cases. There are factors that can affect the absorbency rate and risk assessment, such as the condition of the skin, the potency of the medication, the amount of exposure and what stage of pregnancy the exposure occurs.

Generally, we counsel women to avoid any unnecessary exposures particularly throughout the first trimester. The benefits of some exposures, however, may outweigh the real and/or potential risk. An example of this may be a woman who is going camping and may be at risk for insect and tick bites. In this case, a woman may benefit from the protection offered by an insect repellent.

If you or a client have a concern about an exposure during pregnancy, call the Pregnancy Healthline at (888)722-2903.

New Alliance for Breastfeeding Advocates

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Breastfeeding advocates from around the region have formed the South Jersey Breastfeeding Coalition. Our purpose is to bring together stakeholders who care about the lives of women and children, with the goal of taking cooperative action to lower the barriers to breastfeeding that families in South Jersey face every day.

The Perinatal Cooperative is sponsoring the start-up of the coalition, and the WIC Breastfeeding Initiative is facilitating its early stages. We are following an excellent model provided by the Iowa Department of Public Health, which worked through local coalitions to enhance breastfeeding in their state in the early 1990s. We hope to draw a wide range of partners into the coalition. The health care and nutrition sectors, which have traditionally had the most concern for breastfeeding, are at the core of the coalition.

Judy Schneider, IBCLC, long-time breastfeeding advocate in South Jersey,

describes our efforts, "We're bringing together the people who have the heart for breastfeeding, to work for the Healthy People 2010 goals, to improve overall health by increasing breastfeeding."

Important new partners will include media, government, education, consumers, insurers, and the working world of unions and women's employers.

At the first meeting, coalition members brainstormed a list of commonly-encountered barriers to breastfeeding. To get ready for the September meeting, members are collected specific stories to provide examples of those barriers. These stories can then be used to illustrate our needs, for instance if the coalition decides to apply for grant funding

The list of obstacles is long, but group was hopeful that working together will take us further than we can go on our own.

For more information about the Breastfeeding Alliance, please contact Chris Mulford at 856.582.3000.

Breastfeeding Websites

Here are some breastfeeding websites NN thought might be interesting for its readers.

Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine - www.bfimed.org

Baby Milk Action - www.gn.apc.org/babymilk

Breastfeeding Support Consultants www.bsccenter.org

Bright Future Lactation Resource Center - www.bflrc.com

International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners - www.iblce.org

International Lactation Consultant Association - www.ilca.org

International Society for Research in Human Milk & Lactation - www.isrhml.org

LaLeche League International - www.la lecheleague.org

Lact-Aid International - www.lact-aid.com

Lactation Education Resources - www.leron-line.com

Parentsplace - www.parentsplace.com/expert/lactation

World Alliance for Breastfeeding Advocacy - www.waba.org.br

Human Milk Bank of North America - www.hmbana.org

Umbilical Cord Blood Banking in New Jersey

The New Jersey Cord Blood Bank, established by the Coriell Institute, is a program set up for the collection and storage of umbilical cord blood for use in bone marrow reconstitution.

Blood remaining in the umbilical cord and placenta at the time of birth is a rich source of blood-forming stem cells, the cells that produce platelets and red and white blood cells.

Over the last ten years, hundreds of patients have been successfully treated with cord blood transplants in place of bone marrow for a variety of cancers and other genetic diseases such as lymphoma, leukemia, Tay Sachs disease and immune system disorders. New research is being done on using stem cells to treat victims of strokes and other brain ailments.

Typically, damaged bone marrow is replaced with healthy bone marrow transplanted from a donor. Not only is it often difficult to find a donor whose bone marrow characteristics match those of the person seeking a transplant, but a bone marrow transplant is painful to the donor and costly to the recipient.

"Many who need stem cell transplants do not have tissue-typed siblings to donate stem cells for them," comments Noreen Miller, RN, MSN, Clinical Coordinator for the New

Jersey Cord Blood Bank.

"Finding a matched, unrelated donor through a national registry may take a long time. Cord blood transplantation is both less invasive and less expensive than bone marrow transplants. Cord blood cells are more easily matched than bone marrow as well as lowering the risk of negative side effects and rejection," adds Ms. Miller. This past March Ms. Miller was the primary presenter at the Cooperative's educational program, "Umbilical Cord Blood Banking" in Voorhees, NJ.

Collecting a baby's cord blood is painless and takes less than five minutes to do. Once the umbilical cord is cut and the baby is delivered, the blood remaining in the cord is drained into a sterile bag. This collection method does not interrupt the birthing process. The blood is then frozen and stored in liquid nitrogen until it is needed.

The New Jersey Cord Blood Bank is the nation's only publicly funded, cord blood donation program. This program was established to collect routinely discarded umbilical cord blood from New Jersey hospitals to store at the Coriell Institute.

For more information about this program contact the New Jersey Cord Blood Bank at 856.757.9718 or visit their website at: arginine.umdnj.edu/njcbb.

Little Links: A Collaborative Community Project

Regina Grazel, MSN, RNC, CNS, C, and Elizabeth Hawn, BSN, RNC, Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center, Camden, NJ

The Little Links project was developed in response to a growing desire for youth involvement in community and other volunteer service. The growing push for volunteerism is evident in politicians' speeches, school curricula and religious education requirements. Little Links allows a unique opportunity for members of youth, school and church organizations to positively influence the care and wellbeing of hospitalized newborn infants, while learning about their special needs.

The goals of the Little Links project are:

- to establish partnerships with school, church and community groups in accordance with the vision and mission of Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center
- to enable nurses to recognize and fulfill their roles as ambassadors of the medical center
- to provide nurses with a means to become involved in community outreach and health education
- to provide opportunities for youth groups to engage in service projects for the Intensive Care Nursery

Interested groups are given information and instructions on how to make incubator covers and Snuggle Bunnies. Snuggle

Bunnies are hand crafted bonding aids that are used to absorb and release the mother's scent to the baby in her absence. Students are encouraged to include a personal note with the finished product. These notes offer kind words to the parents or the baby and are cherished by the parents.

Younger students who are unable to participate in sewing projects have made seasonal and holiday decorations. These delightful crafts brighten the mood of the unit and help make the infant's beds more cheerful.

Through reciprocal arrangements with the group leaders, neonatal nurses are given the opportunity to educate these groups on the risk factors for preterm delivery and the ensuing problems for prematurity. Registered nurses from our ICN serve as guest speakers for Girl Scout meetings, high school classes and after school clubs. The presenters emphasize the importance of healthy lifestyle choices before and during pregnancy, and describe the care and characteristics of premature infants. A highlight of the presentation is the distribution of items used in the care of preemies. Various size diapers, BP cuffs, graduated feeders, hats, t-shirts and electrodes, as well as pictures of preemies, are passed around to the group. Other resources including videotapes, photo albums of ICN activities

are also used to complement the presentation according to the allowable time and size of group.

The group leader is invited to bring the student volunteers for a tour of the intensive and transitional care nurseries. This option has been received most enthusiastically by both the students and the group leaders. Actually seeing critically ill and recovering babies grounds the youth in reality, reinforces information obtained in the classroom setting and provides them with a glimpse of the multifaceted role of the neonatal nurse.

Little Links connects neonatal nurses and the community in service and education. This arrangement benefits both the students and the nurses, and ultimately the little ones in our care.

For more information on the Little Links program contact Beth Hawn at 856.757.3506 or Regina Grazel at 856.757.3035 at Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center or visit their website at www.lourdesnet.org.

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If you'd like to submit an article about an exceptional program your hospital or agency is sponsoring NN would like to hear from you.

Comments, suggestions, and submissions should be directed to Nurse Network Editors at the above address.