

Herbs to completely avoid during pregnancy:

Herb	Reason to avoid
Aloe Vera	The leaves are strongly purgative and should not be taken internally.
Arbor vitae (Thuja occidentalis)	A uterine and menstrual stimulant that could damage the fetus.
Autumn crocus (Colichicum autumnale)	Can affect cell division and lead to birth defects.
Barberry (Berberis vulgaris)	Contains high levels of berberine, known to stimulate uterine contractions.
Basil oil	A uterine stimulant; use only during labour.
Beth root (Trillium erectum)	A uterine stimulant; use only during labour.
Black cohosh (Cimicifuga racemosa)	May lead to premature contractions; avoid unless under professional guidance. Safe to use during childbirth.
Bloodroot (Sanguinaria canadensis)	A uterine stimulant that in quite small doses also causes vomiting.
Blue cohosh (Caulophyllum thalictroides)	A uterine stimulant to avoid unless under professional guidance. Safe to use during childbirth.
Broom (Cytisus scoparius)	Causes uterine contractions so should be avoided during pregnancy; in parts of Europe it is given after the birth to prevent blood loss.
Bugleweed (Lycopus virginicus)	Interferes with hormone production in the pituitary gland, so best avoided.
Clove oil	A uterine stimulant used only during labour.
Comfrey (Symphytum officinale)	Contains toxic chemicals that will cross the placenta; do not take internally.
Cotton root (Gossypium herbaceum)	Uterine stimulant traditionally given to encourage contractions during a difficult labour, but rarely used medicinally today.
Devil's claw (Harpagophytum procumbens)	Uterine stimulant, oxytocic.
Dong quai (Angelica polymorpha var. sinensis)	Uterine and menstrual stimulant, best avoided during pregnancy; ideal after childbirth.
False unicorn root (Chamaelirium luteum)	A hormonal stimulant to avoid unless under professional guidance.
Feverfew (Tanacetum parthenium)	Uterine stimulant; may cause premature contractions.
Golden seal (Hydrastis canadensis)	Uterine stimulant; may lead to premature contractions but safe during childbirth.
Greater celandine (Chelidonium majus)	Uterine stimulant; may cause premature contractions.
Juniper and juniper oil (Juniperus communis)	A uterine stimulant; use only during labour.
Lady's mantle (Alchemilla xanthoclora)	A uterine stimulant; use only in labour.

Liferoot (Senecio aureus)	A uterine stimulant containing toxic chemicals that will cross the placenta.
Mistletoe (Viscum album)	A uterine stimulant containing toxic chemicals that may cross the placenta.
Mugwort (Artemisia vulgaris)	A uterine stimulant that may also cause birth defects; avoid unless under professional guidance. Also avoid when breastfeeding.
American pennyroyal (Hedeoma pulegioides)	Reputed uterine stimulant to be avoided during pregnancy.
European pennyroyal (Mentha pulegium)	A uterine stimulant that may also cause birth defects; avoid unless under professional guidance. Also avoid when breastfeeding.
Peruvian bark (Cinchona officinalis)	Toxic; excess may cause blindness and coma. Used to treat malaria and given during pregnancy only to malaria sufferers under professional guidance.
Pokeroot (Phytolacca decandra)	May cause birth defects.
Pseudoginseng (Panax notoginseng)	May cause birth defects.
Pulsatilla (Anemone pulsatilla)	Menstrual stimulant best avoided during pregnancy; limited use during lactation.
Rue (Ruta graveolens)	Uterine and menstrual stimulant; may cause premature contractions.
Sassafras (Sassafras albidum)	A uterine stimulant that may also cause birth defects.
Shepherd's purse (Capsella bursa-pastoris)	A uterine stimulant; use only during labour.
Southernwood (Artemisia abrotanum)	A uterine stimulant that may also cause birth defects; avoid unless under professional guidance. Also avoid when breastfeeding.
Squill (Urginea maritima)	A uterine stimulant that may also cause birth defects.
Tansy (Tanacetum vulgare)	A uterine stimulant that may also cause birth defects.
Wild yam (Dioscorea villosa)	A uterine stimulant to avoid unless under professional guidance; safe during labour.
Wormwood (Artemisia absinthum)	A uterine stimulant that may also cause birth defects; avoid unless under professional guidance. Also avoid when breastfeeding.

Herbs to use only in moderation during pregnancy:

Herb	Reason for caution
Alder buckthorn (Rhamnus frangula)	Strongly purgative, so should not be taken in high doses or for long periods.
Angelica (Angelica archangelica)	A uterine stimulant in high doses, but quite safe as a culinary herb.
Anise and aniseed oil (Pimpinella anisum)	A uterine stimulant in high doses, but quite safe as a culinary herb; avoid using the oil entirely.
Bitter orange (Citrus aurantium)	A uterine stimulant in high doses, but quite safe as a culinary herb or in moderate use.
Caraway (Carum carvi)	A uterine stimulant in high doses, but quite safe as a culinary herb.

Cascara sagrada (<i>Rhamnus purshiana</i>)	Strongly purgative, so should not be taken in high doses or for long periods.
Celery seed and oil (<i>Apium graveolens</i>)	A uterine stimulant in high doses, but quite safe as a culinary herb.
Chamomile oil	The oil is a potent uterine stimulant to be avoided, but the dried or fresh herb is safe in moderation.
Chili (<i>Capsicum</i> spp)	Avoid high doses as they may lead to heartburn; can flavour breast milk when breast-feeding. Moderate culinary use is fine.
Cinnamon (<i>Cinnamomum zeylanicum</i>)	A uterine stimulant in high doses, but quite safe as a culinary herb; avoid the essential oil completely.
Cowslip (<i>Primula veris</i>)	Strongly purgative and a uterine stimulant in high doses.
Elder bark	Strongly purgative, so should not be taken in high doses or for long periods.
Fennel and fennel oil	A uterine stimulant in high doses, but quite safe as a culinary herb; avoid using the oil entirely.
Fenugreek (<i>Trigonella foenum-graecum</i>)	A uterine stimulant in high doses, but quite safe as a culinary herb or during labour.
Garlic (<i>Allium sativa</i>)	Avoid high doses as they may lead to heartburn; can flavor breast milk when breastfeeding. Moderate culinary use is fine.
Gotu kola (<i>Centella asiatica</i>)	Possible uterine stimulant; use in moderation for occasional teas only.
Jasmine oil	A uterine stimulant best reserved for childbirth to ease labour.
Korean ginseng (<i>Panax ginseng</i>)	Clinical reports suggest that high doses in pregnancy can lead to androgynous babies (caused by overstimulation of male sex hormones); use for short periods only.
Lavender (<i>Lavendula argustifolia</i>)	A uterine stimulant in high doses, but quite safe as a culinary herb or for moderate use.
Licorice (<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i>)	High doses can exacerbate high blood pressure; safe in moderation.
Lovage (<i>Levisticum officinale</i>)	A uterine stimulant traditionally used in slow and difficult labour; safe as a culinary herb.
Marjoram and marjoram oil (<i>Origanum vulgare</i>)	A uterine stimulant in high doses, but quite safe as a culinary herb; avoid using the oil entirely.
Motherwort (<i>Leonurus cardiaca</i>)	A uterine stimulant in high doses; best limited to the final weeks and during labour.
Myrrh (<i>Commiphora molmol</i>)	A uterine stimulant that may lead to premature contractions; avoid high doses.
Nutmeg and Nutmeg Oil	Inhibits prostaglandin production and contains hallucinogens that may affect the fetus; once erroneously regarded as an abortifacient. Safe in normal culinary use.
Oregano (<i>Origanum X marjoricum</i> ; <i>O. onites</i>)	A uterine stimulant in high doses, but quite safe as a culinary herb; avoid using the oil entirely.
Parsley (<i>Petroselinum crispum</i>)	Uterine stimulant that may also irritate the fetus in high doses; safe in normal culinary use.
Passion flower (<i>Passiflora incarnata</i>)	A uterine stimulant in high doses; safe for moderate use.
Peppermint oil	A uterine stimulant; avoid the oil entirely, although low doses of the dried herb can be used.
Raspberry leaf (<i>Rubus idaeus</i>)	A uterine stimulant in high doses; best limited to the final six to eight weeks and during labour.
Rhubarb root (<i>Rheum palmatum</i>)	Strongly purgative, so should not be taken in high doses or for long periods.
Rosemary and rosemary oil	A uterine stimulant in high doses; safe in moderation and normal culinary use. Avoid using the oil

	entirely.
Saffron (<i>Crocus sativa</i>)	A uterine stimulant in high doses; safe in normal culinary use.
Sage and sage oil	A uterine and hormonal stimulant in high doses, but quite safe as a culinary herb; avoid using the oil entirely.
Senna (<i>Senna alexandrina</i>)	Strongly purgative, so should not be taken in high doses or for long periods.
Tea, black (<i>Camellia sinensis</i>)	Limit to two cups a day, as excess can lead to palpitations and increased heart rate.
Thyme oil (<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>)	Some reports claim that it acts as a uterine stimulant, though the research is disputed; the herb is quite safe in cooking.
Vervain (<i>Verbena officinalis</i>)	A uterine stimulant in high doses; best limited to the final weeks and during labour.
White horehound (<i>Marrubium vulgare</i>)	Reputed uterine stimulant; safe in moderation in cough drops.
Wood betony (<i>Stachys officinalis</i>)	A uterine stimulant in high doses; best limited to the final weeks and during labour.
Yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>)	A uterine stimulant in high doses; best limited to the final weeks and during labour.

Reference website: <http://www.babycenter.ca/pregnancy/isitsafeto/herb&drugchart/>