

Iodine supplements to pregnant women

Juan, do you have any idea of how widespread is this “current common practice in developed countries of recommending systematic iodine supplementation early in pregnancy, even in areas considered iodine sufficient for the general population such as the US”? I mean, textbooks, guidelines and protocols concerning pre-natal care always mention the importance of supplements of folic acid, and eventually, iron, but there's usually much less talk about iodine supplementation. So, are we actually talking about a “current common practice”? Is this practice perfectly avoidable? If so, why?

Supplements of folic acid might have sense only in the first days of pregnancy, the 20 first before the neural tube is closed. Even then, we do not know the exact mechanism of action (not excluding, teratogenia, the increase of abortion of “errors”). Supplements of iron are generally no indicated, and its use is not recommended. About supplements of iodine, just have a round to Internet and see how many “advocates” are around the world, from New Zealand and Australia to Poland and Spain. In Spain is common practice to recommend supplement of iodine to pregnant women.

It is a practice with no scientific base in countries/regions iodine sufficient for the general population.

The author's 2010 results show potential harm for the mother, while the 2011 results show potential harm for the fetus. Is it still too early or premature to talk about disease mongering? First results of the Spanish group (Rebagliato et al) were publish in 2009. They confirm in 2010 the previous findings about worse outcome in the pregnant. We can speak, no doubt of disease mongering, in this case helping to transform “normal” pregnancy in a “disease” that should be under the care of specialists.

The authors (Rebagliato et al) have said that the 2011 results corresponded to “the first known report of a potentially deleterious effect of maternal consumption of multivitamins containing iodine during pregnancy on psychomotor achievement in infants” and that “these results should be evaluated with caution”. In the meantime, what should we tell our patients at the practice?

Rebagliato et al indeed started their work to support the supplements of iodine. So even for them it was a surprise their findings. They are scientific and ask for caution. Clinical caution ask for just recommend to our females in general, and during the pregnancy, a healthy nutrition which help them to enjoy life and obtain the nutrients they need. Healthy means fruit, vegetables, fish, meat, olive oil and so on (the Mediterranean diet).

This is a cohort study, so we're likely to see more results in 2012. In your opinion, what else could we still expect?

I guess we can expect confirmation of the previous findings.