

'Paracetamol **safe** for expectant women'

➤ Trump remark linking painkiller to autism in children not supported by science: Experts

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PETALING JAYA: United States President Donald Trump has stirred debate after urging pregnant women to avoid Tylenol, claiming the common painkiller could cause autism in children.

However, Malaysian specialists say his remarks are not supported by science and emphasised that paracetamol, the generic name for Tylenol, remains safe for expectant mothers when taken appropriately.

Universiti Sains Malaysia Centre for Drug Research professor Dr Zurina Hassan said paracetamol has long been considered safe in pregnancy when used in moderation.

"Current scientific evidence

does not show that taking paracetamol causes autism or ADHD in children."

She cited a 2024 study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, which examined sibling pairs to account for genetic and environmental factors.

"The analysis found no association between acetaminophen (paracetamol) use during pregnancy and a child's risk of autism, ADHD or intellectual disability.

"This suggests that earlier signals of risk in other studies were likely due to confounding factors, not a causal link."

She said while paracetamol does cross the placenta and the blood-brain barrier, possible harms remain theoretical, with

hypotheses ranging from oxidative stress to hormonal disruption.

"These are theoretical pathways. We are only seeing correlation, not causation."

Trump's comments, delivered alongside Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr on Sept 22 at a White House press conference, were quickly dismissed by medical professionals as unsubstantiated.

Universiti Putra Malaysia obstetrics and gynaecology specialist Dr Nurul Iftida Basri said the bigger risk lies in untreated illness.

"Unresolved fever raises the mother's core temperature, which in turn increases the temperature in the womb.

This could harm the unborn foetus, particularly if birth occurs while the mother still has a high fever."

She added that pain itself could also have significant physical and psychological effects.

"Paracetamol remains the

first-line analgesic for pain during pregnancy."

She also said there was no need to revise Malaysia's obstetric guidelines, despite recent headlines suggesting otherwise.

"A recent statement by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the UK Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency confirmed that paracetamol remains safe in pregnancy and that there is no evidence it causes autism in children. No change is needed for now."

Both experts advised expectant mothers to use paracetamol judiciously and consult healthcare providers if in doubt.

"Any statement on the dangers of medications during pregnancy must be based on rigorous scientific evidence.

"A single study does not necessarily represent the true relationship, and news headlines may not reflect professional consensus."