

Cannabis and Pregnancy



Cannabis (also known as marijuana) is a psychoactive drug containing the compounds Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and Cannabidiol (CBD). Cannabis remains illegal at the federal level, even as some states have legalized it for adults to use medicinally and recreationally.

It is the most widely used illegal drug by pregnant women in the United States. There is a growing number of women who believe that it is safe to use while pregnant. They believe that it is a natural way to treat nausea and vomiting, or “morning sickness” and to manage anxiety or stress.

This is not true. The use of cannabis during pregnancy is not safe, and can have serious, potentially deadly consequences. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) discourages doctors from prescribing or recommending the use of cannabis during preconception, pregnancy and lactation.

How is Cannabis Passed From Mother to Baby?

No matter how the drug is consumed by the pregnant person - whether by smoking, vaping, eating or drinking, THC will reach their baby in three ways:

- Through the bloodstream and into the placenta.
- Through secondhand smoke that enters the baby's lungs.
- Through breast milk. “Pumping and dumping” does not work. THC is stored in fat cells and is slowly released over several weeks, which means it remains in the breast milk.

- **No amount of cannabis usage is safe during pregnancy.**
- **Cannabis usage during pregnancy can lead to low birth weight, brain development issues and a higher risk for stillbirth.**
- **Cannabis usage while breastfeeding can increase a baby's risk of cognitive issues and delays in their motor development.**

What Are the Potential Health Effects of Cannabis Use During Pregnancy?

The use of cannabis during pregnancy may be harmful to a baby's health and cause a variety of problems, including:

- Fetal growth restriction.
- Low birth weight.
- Preterm birth (being born before 37 weeks of gestation).
- Long-term brain development issues affecting memory, learning and behavior.
- A greater risk of stillbirth.

The potential health effects of CBD use during pregnancy remain unknown. However, given the understanding of CBD's general effects on the body, there is significant cause for concern. It is expected that some CBD may transfer to the baby, which could pose risks during pregnancy.



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What Are the Potential Health Effects of Cannabis Use While Breastfeeding?

The chemicals from cannabis can be passed from mother to baby through breast milk. THC is stored in body fat and is slowly released over time, meaning a baby could still be exposed even after a person has stopped using cannabis. The amount of time THC can remain in the milk can range from 6 days to 6 weeks.

THC can increase a newborn's risk for brain development issues, hyperactivity, poor cognitive function and other long-term consequences. It may also cause a possible delay in motor development (learning to crawl and walk).

In some people, the use of cannabis can also impact the production of prolactin (a hormone that helps the body produce milk). There is a concern that people who frequently use cannabis may see a decline in the quality and amount of milk that they produce.

People who are breastfeeding should avoid all cannabis use.

Is Secondhand Smoke Dangerous to People Who Are Pregnant?

Secondhand smoke or secondhand aerosol is the smoke or vapor, respectively, that other people can inhale when someone nearby is smoking or vaping. This means that people who are not smoking or vaping are exposed to harmful chemicals.

Secondhand marijuana smoke or vapor contains many of the same toxic and cancer-causing chemicals found in tobacco smoke/vapor. It is never safe to smoke or vape cannabis around pregnant people.

Does Using Cannabis Increase the Chance of Miscarriage?

Miscarriage is common and can occur in any pregnancy for many different reasons. It is not known if using cannabis increases the chance for miscarriage.

One study found that people who used marijuana were at an increased risk of miscarriage. Other studies have not confirmed this finding.

Does Using Cannabis Make it Harder to Become Pregnant?

It is not known if cannabis can make it harder to get pregnant. Some studies suggest that long-term use of cannabis might affect the menstrual cycle, which could make it harder to get pregnant.

How Can Men Using Cannabis Affect Fertility?

Cannabis use might impact sperm, including the number of sperm (sperm count), the size and shape of sperm (morphology) and the ability for sperm to reach the egg (motility). These factors could make it harder to conceive. In general, exposures that fathers or sperm donors have are unlikely to increase the risks to a pregnancy.

Connecticut Resources

CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

www.ct.gov/DMHAS

Drug Free CT

www.drugfreect.org

Substance Exposed Pregnancy Initiative of Connecticut

www.sepict.org

Be In The Know CT

beintheknowct.org

National Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

www.samhsa.gov

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

www.nida.nih.gov



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