

# Go-to Guide: Understanding Marijuana Use During Pregnancy and Parenthood



## 1. Is it safe to use marijuana during pregnancy?

- ▶ Think of marijuana as a mix of different chemicals. One of these is called THC, which makes you high. Our bodies make chemicals that look like THC and these chemicals connect to specific areas inside us. When marijuana is used, THC sticks to these areas more strongly than our natural chemicals do, throwing off how our body functions. Since these areas are spread throughout the body, using marijuana can lead to different effects on how we feel.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ No amount of marijuana is safe to use during pregnancy. THC and other chemicals in marijuana pass through the mother's placenta to the baby. Since THC loves fat, THC will go to places in your baby's brain that have lots of fat. This can disrupt how your baby's brain grows and cause problems throughout the child's life.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. What are the risks of using marijuana while pregnant?

- ▶ Marijuana can affect your baby's brain growth, making it difficult for them to pay attention and learn as they grow. It can also lead to behavioral problems in children. Studies mostly looked at marijuana when it was a lot weaker, not the super strong marijuana available today. So, we don't yet know what happens when babies are exposed to this super strong marijuana.<sup>2</sup>

## 3. Can using marijuana while breastfeeding harm the baby?

- ▶ If you're breastfeeding, it's safest not to use any marijuana. THC loves fat so will travel to areas high in fat like breastmilk and stay there. Even after a mother stop using marijuana, the THC stored in body fat is slowly released over time, exposing your baby to THC. "Pumping and dumping" will not remove THC from breastmilk.<sup>3</sup>

## 4. Is smoking marijuana safer than smoking cigarettes?

- ▶ Smoking marijuana is not safe because it exposes both the mother and baby to the same dangerous poisons found in cigarettes but at much higher levels. It can also lower a mother's oxygen level, which can cause breathing problems and other bad effects on the baby's growth. It is not safe to smoke marijuana or cigarettes during pregnancy.<sup>2</sup>

## 5. Are certain marijuana products safer?

- ▶ Marijuana in any form is not safe to use during pregnancy. The baby is still exposed to THC and other chemicals found within marijuana which can harm your baby's growth and development.<sup>2</sup>

## 6. Is marijuana safe to use for nausea, morning sickness or other pregnancy-related symptoms?

- ▶ There is no safe amount of marijuana for a baby. If you are experiencing morning sickness or other pregnancy-related symptoms, talk to a doctor who can help manage pregnancy related symptoms safely.<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ Regular marijuana use can lead to a health condition called Cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome, also known as CHS. Symptoms include severe stomach pain and vomiting that can be mistaken for morning sickness. This can make you low on fluids and nutrients, which is dangerous. If you are a regular marijuana user and have these symptoms, talk to your healthcare provider right away so you can get proper treatment.<sup>4</sup>





## 7. What about using it for anxiety, depression, or other mental health conditions?

- ▶ There is no safe amount of marijuana to use during pregnancy. Because THC binds to areas in the brain that control emotion, when you use marijuana, your brain essentially gets flooded with THC. This can lead to you feeling paranoid and can worsen feelings of anxiety and other mental health problems. If you are experiencing any medical condition, it is important to talk to a doctor who can help find a safe and effective option for your condition.<sup>5</sup>

## 8. Can marijuana help with sleep?

- ▶ THC connects to areas in the brain involved with sleep, so when you use marijuana, your natural sleep patterns are disrupted.<sup>6</sup> Because babies have a lot of these areas in their brain that THC can connect to, if their mothers use marijuana during pregnancy, THC can mess with how their brain develops, causing them to have sleep problems as they get older. Poor sleep is bad for health and linked to issues like heart and mental health problems. There is no safe amount of marijuana to use during pregnancy.<sup>7</sup>
- ▶ Because marijuana is addictive, people may feel withdrawal symptoms like trouble sleeping, anxiety, and mood swings when they try to quit. They may think marijuana helps with these issues, but it's the withdrawal that makes them feel that way. Once they stop using marijuana, these symptoms will stop.<sup>8</sup>

## 9. I have a medical marijuana card. Is this safe for my baby?

- ▶ There is no difference between medical and recreational marijuana. Marijuana, regardless of the form, contains THC and there is no safe amount of THC for your baby. Talk to your doctor about other options that do not harm you or your baby.<sup>9</sup>

## 10. Some states have legalized marijuana. Doesn't that mean it's safe?

- ▶ Legal does not mean safe. Tobacco and alcohol are two examples. Just as you would be cautious with prescription or over-the-counter medications during pregnancy and breastfeeding, avoid using marijuana or marijuana derived products during this period. If you are using medical marijuana, talk with a doctor about safe options for you and your baby's health. No amount of THC is safe for use during pregnancy.<sup>2</sup>

## 11. Is CBD safe to use during pregnancy or breastfeeding?

- ▶ Other components of the marijuana plant, such as CBD, should be avoided as CBD can also pass to the baby during pregnancy and into breastmilk. Research on CBD products has found that such products may contain THC and other harmful chemicals including pesticides, bacteria, heavy metals, and other contaminants. It is important to know that CBD products are falsely advertised as treatments for a variety of conditions which have not been proven by scientific research and are not FDA approved.<sup>1</sup>

## 12. What about using marijuana after pregnancy?

- ▶ Using marijuana can produce a lot of different effects including impairing judgement and producing psychosis so it is not safe to be high while taking care of a baby or child. To keep your baby safe, do not allow anyone high to take care of your child. It is important not to sleep with your baby, especially if you are high.<sup>10</sup>

## 13. What should I do if I used marijuana before realizing I was pregnant?

- ▶ If you used marijuana before knowing you were pregnant, talk to your doctor as they can provide guidance and monitor for any potential complications. The best thing to do to protect your baby is stop using marijuana as soon as possible.
- ▶ If you are having a difficult time stopping or reducing your use, help is available. Contact 1-800-662-HELP (4357).<sup>9</sup>



## 14. What if my partner or someone in my home uses marijuana?

- ▶ If you live with someone who uses marijuana, it is important that they do not smoke or vape in the home. The same poisons in cigarette smoke are found in marijuana smoke.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ If there are marijuana products within the home, it is important to keep these products locked up and out of reach from children and teens. Edible marijuana products look like candy and other foods that appeal to kids. Marijuana is poisonous to kids, so if your child accidentally eats a marijuana product, call the poison control hotline at 1-800-222-1222 or seek emergency help by dialing 9-1-1 or taking the child to the nearest hospital. Watch out for signs such as irregular breathing, funny walking, tiredness, and difficulty sitting up.<sup>11</sup>

## 15. Is it ok for my child to be around marijuana smoke?

- ▶ The safest and healthiest environment for your baby is a smoke-free environment, whether it's from marijuana, cigarettes, or vaping. The same chemicals in cigarette smoke are found in marijuana smoke and vape aerosol. Studies have found that when parents smoke marijuana around their children, those children are more likely to get viral respiratory infections compared to children whose parents do not smoke marijuana near them.<sup>12</sup>

## 16. Is it ok to drive after using marijuana?

- ▶ Driving after using marijuana is against the law and dangerous. Marijuana can cause you to have a slower reaction time, mess up your ability to make decisions, make it hard to control the vehicle, and make what you see seem different. Do not drive or let your child ride in a vehicle if the driver is high.<sup>13</sup>

## 17. Can using marijuana affect a person's ability to have children?

- ▶ Marijuana can harm a male's reproductive system. It can change the shape, size, and movement of sperm, mess with hormone levels, and even cause trouble with getting or keeping an erection. If one or both partners use marijuana, it might make it harder to get pregnant.<sup>14</sup>

Remember, the health and well-being of both you and your baby are top priorities during pregnancy. Always consult with your doctor for personalized guidance and support. If you are having a difficult time stopping or reducing your use, help is available. **Contact 1-800-662-help (4357).**

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health or substance related crisis, **dial 9-8-8.**

For more information, visit

<https://www.marijuanaknowthetruth.org/marijuana-and-pregnancy/>.



### References:

- <sup>1</sup>Polcaro, J., & Vetrano, I. M. (2020). Cannabis in pregnancy and lactation – A review. *Missouri Medicine*, 117(5). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7723128/> <sup>2</sup>Ryan, S. A., Ammerman, S. D., & O'Connor, M. E. (2018). Marijuana use during pregnancy and breastfeeding: Implications for neonatal and childhood outcomes. *Pediatrics*, 142(3). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-1889> <sup>3</sup>Lo, J. O., Hedges, J. C., & Girardi, G. (2022). Impact of cannabinoids on pregnancy, reproductive health, and offspring outcomes. *American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 227(4), 571-581. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajog.2022.05.056> <sup>4</sup>Galvin, S. L., & Coulson, C. C. (2023). Addressing cannabis consumption among patients with hyperemesis gravidarum. *AJOG Global Reports*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xagr.2023.100180> <sup>5</sup>Freeman, D., Dunn, G., Murray, R. M., Evans, N., Lister, R., Antley, A., Slater, M., Godlewski, B., Cornish, R., Williams, J., Di Simplicio, M., Igoumenou, A., Brenneisen, R., Tunbridge, E. M., Harrison, P. J., Harmer, C. J., Cowen, P., & Morrison, P. D. (2015). How cannabis causes paranoia: Using the intravenous administration of Δ9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) to identify key cognitive mechanisms leading to paranoia. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 41(2), 391-399. <https://doi.org/10.1093/schbul/sbu098> <sup>6</sup>Diep, C., Tian, C., Vachhani, K., Won, C., Wijeyesundera, D. N., Clarke, H., Singh, M., & Ladha, K. S. (2022). Recent cannabis use and nightly sleep duration in adults: A population analysis of the NHANES from 2005 to 2018. *Regional Anesthesia & Pain Medicine*, 47(2), 100-104. <https://doi.org/10.1136/rapm-2021-103161> <sup>7</sup>Winiger, E. A., & Hewitt, J. K. (2020). Prenatal cannabis exposure and sleep outcomes in children 9-10 years of age in the adolescent brain cognitive development SM study. *Sleep Health*, 6(6), 787-789. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sleh.2020.05.006> <sup>8</sup>Bonnet, U., & Preuss, U. W. (2017). The cannabis withdrawal syndrome: Current insights. *Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation*, 8, 9-37. <https://doi.org/10.2147/SAR.S109576> <sup>9</sup>The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. (n.d.). Marijuana and pregnancy. Retrieved April 30, 2024, from <https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/marijuana-and-pregnancy> <sup>10</sup>Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment. (2015, March 18). Marijuana pregnancy and breastfeeding guidance for Colorado health care providers prenatal visits. Retrieved April 20, 2024, from <https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/MJPregBreastfeedingGuidelines.pdf> <sup>11</sup>Tweet, M. S., Nemanich, A., & Wahl, M. (2023). Pediatric edible cannabis exposures and acute toxicity: 2017-2021. *Pediatrics*, 151(2). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2022-057761> <sup>12</sup>Johnson, A. B., Wang, G. S., Wilson, K. Cline, D. M., Craven, T. E., Slaven, S., Raghavan, V., & Mistry, R. D. (2021). Association between secondhand marijuana smoke and respiratory infections in children. *Pediatric Research*, 91, 1769-1774. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41390-021-01641-0> <sup>13</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, October 19). Driving. Marijuana and Public Health. <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/driving.html> <sup>14</sup>Srinivasan, M., Hamouda, R. K., Ambedkar, B., Arzoun, H. I., Sahib, I., Fondeur, J., Escudero Mendez, L., & Mohammed, L. (2021). The effect of marijuana on the incidence and evolution of male infertility: A systematic review. *Cureus*, 13(12). <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.20119>

# Additional Resources



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- ▶ For more information and to access additional resources, please visit our webpage at [www.marijuanaknowthetruth.org/marijuana-and-pregnancy](http://www.marijuanaknowthetruth.org/marijuana-and-pregnancy) or scan the QR code.
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PATHWAYS  
2 PREVENTION



Pregnant women who use marijuana are more likely to have babies **born prematurely.**

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CHILDREN WHOSE MOTHERS USED MARIJUANA DURING THEIR PREGNANCY ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A **SUBSTANCE USE PROBLEM** LATER IN LIFE.

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THC can reach the baby during pregnancy and **harm development.**

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