

Remember...

Effects of drug and alcohol use are different for every pregnancy and every infant, depending on reasons such as:

- amount used
- if other drugs are used, and which ones
- when in the pregnancy the drugs are used
- mother's general health
- other risks in the baby's environment

It helps you and your baby if you cut back or stop using marijuana at any point in your pregnancy.

For more information about the effects of marijuana use during pregnancy, call:

- your doctor
- a public health nurse
- an alcohol and drug counsellor
- Motherrisk infoline (confidential counselling)
Toll Free 1-877-327-4636

Sheway

533 East Hastings Street, Vancouver, B.C.
Phone: 604-216-1699

A/D Information Line

Phone: 604-660-9382
1-800-663-1441

Detox Access Line

Phone: 604-658-1250

Pender Clinic

59 W. Pender
Phone: 604-669-9181

3-Bridges Community Health Centre

1292 Hornby Street, Vancouver
Phone: 604-736-9844

Community Aboriginal Health

Advocate: Phone: 604-873-1833

Mental Health Liaison Worker

Phone: 604-872-6723

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Marijuana Use During Pregnancy

Effects on Mother and Baby



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How does marijuana work in the body?

Marijuana, hashish, and hash oil are from the cannabis plant. How marijuana works is still not completely understood, but THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol) is what produces mood-altering effects such as feelings of relaxation and talkativeness.

There are 50% more tar products and 70% more cancer-producing agents in marijuana than in cigarettes.

In recent years, new growing methods have produced marijuana with a much higher concentration of THC.

Marijuana is the most widely used illegal drug in Canada.

What are the effects of marijuana for the pregnant woman?

Few studies have looked at the effects of marijuana use during pregnancy and some of the studies show results that disagree with others.

Several effects may be due to the smoking process (as with tobacco). In fact, a few are the same, such as:

- decreased weight gain
- anemia (low red blood cell count) and tiredness
- unusual patterns of labour (i.e., too rapid or too long)
- higher risk of infection
- increased heart rate and blood pressure

plus: THC lowers the immune system's ability to fight disease.

The more you use the greater your risk of developing complications.

What are the effects of prenatal marijuana use on the baby?

- premature birth
- smaller birth weight (more likely associated with nicotine use)
- mild withdrawal symptoms such as tremors, startles, poor sleeping, and difficulty dealing with visual stimulation.

What about breastfeeding?

THC passes through into breast milk and to the baby during feeding. Levels of THC in the breast milk can be 8 times higher than in mother's blood. It also lowers the amount of hormones needed to produce the milk.

With little research available, most experts recommend not using marijuana during breastfeeding.

What are the outcomes for children?

Few studies have been done that followed children who were exposed prenatally to marijuana. Some effects found in these studies include:

- problems with attention and concentration
- lower verbal and memory skills
- difficulty with vision