



MARIJUANA AND YOUR BABY

Preventing Exposure of Your Infant to Drugs
While You Are Pregnant or Breastfeeding





Although marijuana use is legal for adults (21 or older) in the District of Columbia, most drugs, including marijuana, alcohol, and tobacco are not safe for pregnant moms, breastfeeding moms or their babies.

Marijuana, Pregnancy, and Your Baby

- Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the chemical in marijuana that makes you feel "high."
- Using marijuana while pregnant will pass THC on to your baby and may harm your child's development.
- After your baby is born, marijuana may impact your baby's attention span, which can make it difficult for your child to do well in school.
- Always check with your doctor before taking any medications while pregnant or breastfeeding.
- If you are struggling with nausea, loss of appetite, or discomfort, talk to your doctor.

What happens if my baby tests positive for THC at birth?

- If the hospital tests your newborn baby

as positive for THC (or any other substances), DC law requires hospital staff to contact child protective services (CPS).

- Once a hospital contacts CPS, CFSA social workers partner with you and your family to help identify strategies and interventions that will help you keep your infant safe.
- As a parent, you will partner with the social worker to develop a Plan of Safe Care to ensure your baby's safety and well-being once you return home.

REMEMBER!

CFSA's goal is to keep families together. However, if a CPS social worker identifies any immediate safety concerns during the CPS Investigation, CFSA has the legal obligation to address those concerns. To ensure a child's safety, CFSA may provide additional assistance to you and your family or connect you to community resources for services to your family. If necessary, CFSA may go to court to seek removal of the child or children from the home.

Keep Your Baby Safe During Sleep

Babies should ALWAYS sleep alone on their backs and in their own crib or Pack 'n Play.

During your baby's sleep time, cribs and Pack 'n Plays should ALWAYS be clear of blankets and other coverings, toys, stuffed animals, and pillows.

REMINDER!

Any smoke in the home, including marijuana smoke, makes it harder for babies to breathe well. In addition, research shows that asthma symptoms worsen for children who are exposed to smoke, including marijuana.² Marijuana smoke has many of the same chemicals as tobacco smoke.

Vape pens and marijuana edibles (gummies, cookies, brownies, etc.) contain the same THC as leaf marijuana. All THC can be harmful to your baby and should be avoided during pregnancy and while breastfeeding.

Marijuana and Breastfeeding

- Breastfeeding has many physical and emotional health benefits for baby and mother. However, the experts recommend that you discontinue breastfeeding if you use marijuana.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics explains that THC is stored in body fat, including breast milk. Even if you are pumping breast milk to bottle feed, your baby will still ingest THC.
- By nature, a baby's brain has a lot of fat. That means the baby may store THC for a long time, which may result in harmful effects, such as impulsivity and lower IQ scores.¹



- Please talk to your doctor if you are pregnant or breastfeeding and you need help to stop using marijuana.

Do not allow anyone to smoke any substance in your home or around your baby.

¹<http://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2019/marijuana-exposure-affects-developing-babies-brains/>

²<https://community.aafa.org/blog/can-secondhand-marijuana-cannabis-smoke-affect-children-with-asthma>

What happens if my child eats or drinks marijuana by accident?

- Marijuana can make children very sick. Symptoms of exposure include a child having difficulty with breathing, sitting up, walking, or sudden sleepiness.
- If you suspect your child has been exposed to marijuana, call 911 or take your child immediately to the nearest emergency room.
- You can also make a free phone call to the Poison Control Hotline: 1-800-222-1222.
- Treat all marijuana products as any other potentially harmful products and keep them safely away from children.

REMEMBER!

- Being high or “a little buzzed” while doing daily activities can be very risky. You may lose coordination, or you may lose focus when you need to pay attention.
- Some types of marijuana can make people feel very sleepy when they are high. Because of this, caring for your baby while high is not safe.
- If you plan to use marijuana, make sure there is another adult who can safely care for your baby.
- Do not let anyone who is high care for your baby.
- It is not safe to drive a car or any other motor vehicle while high.
- Do not let your baby ride in a vehicle driven by anyone who is high.

Excluding footnotes, the above information comes from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

