

Talking About Cannabis Use During Pregnancy



Health organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommend that pregnant women not use cannabis.¹ Research on cannabis use during pregnancy is limited. What is known is that there are possible risks to a fetus, such as neurological abnormalities, preterm birth, low birth weight, or even stillbirth.¹⁻⁴ It is best to advise patients to avoid the use of all cannabis products during pregnancy. Help your community be informed about healthy practices and advise they do not use cannabis during pregnancy or when they could become pregnant.



Quick Facts

- Cannabis use is more common in the first trimester of pregnancy.^{2,5}
- Cannabis has become more potent over the years. The amount of THC (the main psychoactive component in cannabis) in products has increased.⁶
- THC crosses from mother to baby via the placenta, no matter how it's used (smoking, vaping, dabbing, edibles, etc.).⁷

Common Conversations

Struggling to have conversations about cannabis? Let's start here.



“There are a lot of reasons why people use cannabis, including during pregnancy. Can you tell me a bit about why you use cannabis?”



Misperception

Cannabis helps with nausea.



Fact

While people report using cannabis during pregnancy for a variety of reasons, there are no medical indications for cannabis use during pregnancy.¹ In fact, cannabis use has been associated with a *higher* likelihood of moderate-to-severe nausea and vomiting in early pregnancy.⁵

Informed Response

“Cannabis can harm your baby. Would you be open to hearing about other options for nausea that are safer and more effective during pregnancy?”



Misperception

Cannabis is legal, so it's safe.



Fact

Similar to alcohol use, legality does not mean the substance is safe, especially not for every person in every circumstance. Using cannabis during pregnancy may harm the baby.⁸

Informed Response

“Legal status does not equal safety, especially in pregnancy. It can be confusing if you're hearing different advice about cannabis use. We do not recommend starting cannabis use during pregnancy. If you use cannabis, quitting at any time during pregnancy can benefit both you and your baby.”



Misperception

Edibles are safer than smoking.



Fact

The key issue is that THC (the main psychoactive component in cannabis) crosses the placenta regardless of how it enters the bloodstream.⁷

While different methods of cannabis use (smoking, vaping, edibles, oils) may have varying effects on the body of the person using cannabis, the route of use does not change the risks to a fetus. All forms expose the fetus to THC and other cannabinoids that can harm development.¹

Informed Response

“Different forms of cannabis do not change the potential risk to a baby. While edibles don’t have the same negative effects on your lungs as smoking can, it is still unsafe for your baby.”



Misperception

I didn’t know I was pregnant and have been using cannabis, so it doesn’t matter now.



Fact

Cannabis can impact development during all three trimesters of pregnancy, making quitting at any time beneficial.⁹

Informed Response

“It is never too late to stop cannabis use during pregnancy. Is it okay with you if I share some resources on stopping cannabis use while pregnant?”



Misperception

I know someone who used cannabis during pregnancy, and their baby was fine.

I used cannabis during my last pregnancy, and my baby was fine.



Fact

Some babies exposed to cannabis during pregnancy appear healthy at birth, but studies show that prenatal cannabis exposure is associated with disruptions to brain development and higher risks of negative outcomes, including neurodevelopmental and cognitive effects identified in childhood and later.^{1,9-11}

Informed Response

“Every pregnancy is different and effects of cannabis may not be apparent until early childhood or later. The safest thing to do to protect your baby is to avoid any type of cannabis use throughout your pregnancy.”

Additional Resources

- NACCHO – [Promoting Substance-Free Pregnancies](#)
- CDC – [Cannabis and Pregnancy](#)
- ACOG – [Clinical Consensus: Cannabis Use During Pregnancy and Lactation; Marijuana and Pregnancy Information](#)
- SAMHSA – [Marijuana and Pregnancy; Advisory: Cannabis Use Disorder in Primary Care Settings—A Lifespan Approach](#)
- You Quit, Two Quit – [Cannabis and Pregnancy](#)
- Quit resource options:
 - Cleveland Clinic – [How to Quit](#)
 - [Marijuana Anonymous](#)
 - The Substance-Exposed Infants Committee of the Kent County, Michigan Infant Health Action Team created a brochure to share with clients who are pregnant or may become pregnant. Local health departments can consider adapting for their own use. – [Tips to Quit](#)

Did you know...?
Researchers found an *increase* in morning sickness severity in early pregnancy among people who used cannabis in the three months before pregnancy compared with those who did not use cannabis.⁵

- ¹American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) Committee on Clinical Consensus–Obstetrics. Cannabis use during pregnancy and lactation. *Obstet Gynecol.* 2025;146(4):600-611. doi:10.1097/AOG.0000000000006053
- ²Metz TD, Silver RM, McMillin GA, et al. Prenatal marijuana use by self-report and umbilical cord sampling in a state with marijuana legalization. *Obstet Gynecol.* 2019;133(1):98-104. doi:10.1097/AOG.0000000000003028
- ³Michalski CA, Hung RJ, Seeto RA, et al. Association between maternal cannabis use and birth outcomes: an observational study. *BMC Pregnancy Childbirth.* 2020;20(1):771. doi:10.1186/s12884-020-03371-3
- ⁴Lo JO, Hedges JC, Girardi G. Impact of cannabinoids on pregnancy, reproductive health, and offspring outcomes. *Am J Obstet Gynecol.* 2022;227(4):571-581. doi:10.1016/j.ajog.2022.05.056
- ⁵Vanderziel A, Anthony JC, Barondess D, Kerver JM, Alshaarawy O. Nausea and vomiting of pregnancy and prenatal cannabis use in a Michigan sample. *Am J Obstet Gynecol.* 2023;5(12):101171. doi:10.1016/j.ajogmf.2023.101171
- ⁶National Institute on Drug Abuse. Cannabis Potency Data. 2024. <https://nida.nih.gov/research/research-data-measures-resources/cannabis-potency-data>
- ⁷Wu CS, Jew CP, Lu HC. Lasting impacts of prenatal cannabis exposure and the role of endogenous cannabinoids in the developing brain. *Future Neurol.* 2011;6(4):459-480. doi:10.2217/fnl.11.27
- ⁸Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cannabis Frequently Asked Questions. 2025. <https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/faq/index.html>
- ⁹Richardson KA, Hester AK, McLemore GL. Prenatal cannabis exposure - The “first hit” to the endocannabinoid system. *Neurotoxicol Teratol.* 2016;58:5-14. doi:10.1016/j.ntt.2016.08.003
- ¹⁰Ryan SA, Ammerman SD, O'Connor ME. Marijuana use during pregnancy and breastfeeding: implications for neonatal and childhood outcomes. *Pediatrics.* 2018;142(3). doi:10.1542/peds.2018-1889
- ¹¹Acosta-Rodriguez H, Bobba P, Zeevi T, Ment LR, Payabvash S. The effect of prenatal marijuana exposure on white matter microstructure and cortical morphology during late childhood. *Am J Neuroradiol.* 2025;46(10):2176-2185. doi:10.3174/ajnr.A8774