

Marijuana Use & Your Baby



Currently, possession or use of marijuana is illegal in Nebraska. There is no medical marijuana program allowances for patients in Nebraska. Consuming marijuana (cannabis, weed, pot, etc.) can affect the health of your baby and is not recommended for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, who plan to become pregnant soon, or are caring for a child. If you are using marijuana as self-medication, talk to your primary care provider about alternative treatment options for your underlying conditions. Here are some important facts you should know.

How Marijuana Affects Your Baby

No matter how you use marijuana (smoking, vaping, eating, or drinking), the active ingredient in marijuana, THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), will reach your baby in three ways:

- Through your bloodstream and into the placenta (the organ that feeds your baby during pregnancy).^{1,2}
- Through your breast milk.^{3,4}
"Pumping and Dumping" doesn't work. THC is stored in fat cells and is slowly released over several weeks, so it stays in your breast milk.⁵
- Through secondhand smoke that enters your baby's lungs.^{6,7}

Marijuana Can Harm Your Baby

Research shows that if you use marijuana while you are pregnant or breastfeeding:

- Your baby may be born with a lower birth weight.^{8,9}
- A low birth weight baby is more likely to have health problems, especially in the first year of life.¹⁰
- The growth and development of your baby's brain can be harmed.^{11,12}

No Amount of Marijuana is Safe

Leading doctors' organizations such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists¹³ and the American Academy of Pediatrics¹⁴ recommend that:

- If you already use marijuana and are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant soon, discontinue use. Talk to your primary care provider about alternative treatment options if needed.
- Don't breathe cannabis smoke if you are pregnant. It is bad both for you and your baby because, like tobacco smoke, it lowers your oxygen levels, introduces toxins into your system and harms your lungs.^{15,16}

How Marijuana Use Impacts Your Ability to Care for Your Baby

- Using marijuana can make people feel very sleepy when they are high, and this may affect how a parent interacts with their child.
- Caregivers may not be fully aware of the infant's basic needs such as when they are hungry, need a diaper change, or just want to be cuddled.
- Opportunities to play or read to your baby may be missed. These activities are a very important way that children begin to learn about the world around them.
- It is not safe to drive while high. Do not drive high or let your baby ride in a car if the driver is high.



Marijuana Use & Your Baby

References

1. Bailey, J. R., H. C. Cunny, M. G. Paule, and W. Slikker, Jr. 1987. "Fetal disposition of delta 9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) during late pregnancy in the rhesus monkey." *Toxicol Appl Pharmacol* 90 (2):315-21.
2. Hutchings, D. E., B. R. Martin, Z. Gamagaris, N. Miller, and T. Fico. 1989. "Plasma concentrations of delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol in dams and fetuses following acute or multiple prenatal dosing in rats." *Life Sci* 44 (11):697-701.
3. Garry, A., V. Rigourd, A. Amirouche, V. Fauroux, S. Aubry, and R. Serreau. 2009. "Cannabis and breastfeeding." *J Toxicol* 2009:596149. doi: 10.1155/2009/596149.
4. Perez-Reyes, M., and M. E. Wall. 1982. "Presence of delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol in human milk." *N Engl J Med* 307 (13):819-20. doi: 10.1056/nejm198209233071311.
5. Reece-Stremtan, S., and K. A. Marinelli. 2015. "ABM clinical protocol #21: guidelines for breastfeeding and substance use or substance use disorder, revised 2015." *Breastfeed Med* 10 (3):135-41. doi: 10.1089/bfm.2015.9992.
6. Herrmann, E. S., E. J. Cone, J. M. Mitchell, G. E. Bigelow, C. LoDico, R. Flegel, and R. Vandrey. 2015. "Non-smoker exposure to secondhand cannabis smoke II: Effect of room ventilation on the physiological, subjective, and behavioral/cognitive effects." *Drug Alcohol Depend* 151:194-202. doi: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2015.03.019.
7. Moore, C., C. Coulter, D. Uges, J. Tuyay, S. van der Linde, A. van Leeuwen, M. Garnier, and J. Orbita, Jr. 2011. "Cannabinoids in oral fluid following passive exposure to marijuana smoke." *Forensic Sci Int* 212 (1-3):227-30. doi: 10.1016/j.forsciint.2011.06.019.
8. Gunn, J. K., C. B. Rosales, K. E. Center, A. Nunez, S. J. Gibson, C. Christ, and J. E. Ehiri. 2016. "Prenatal exposure to cannabis and maternal and child health outcomes: a systematic review and meta-analysis." *BMJ Open* 6 (4):e009986. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2015-009986.
9. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2017. "The Health Effects of Cannabis and Cannabinoids: The Current State of Evidence and Recommendations for Research." Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: 10.17226/24625.
10. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau. "Child Health USA 2014." Rockville, Maryland: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014.
11. Wu, C. S., C. P. Jew, and H. C. Lu. 2011. "Lasting impacts of prenatal cannabis exposure and the role of endogenous cannabinoids in the developing brain." *Future Neurol* 6 (4):459-480.
12. Leech, S. L., G. A. Richardson, L. Goldschmidt, and N. L. Day. 1999. "Prenatal substance exposure: effects on attention and impulsivity of 6-year-olds." *Neurotoxicol Teratol* 21 (2):109-18.
13. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. 2015. "Committee Opinion No. 637: Marijuana Use During Pregnancy and Lactation." *Obstet Gynecol* 126 (1):234-8. doi: 10.1097/01.AOG.0000467192.89321.a6.
14. American Academy of Pediatrics. 2012. "Section on Breastfeeding: Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk." *Pediatrics* 129 (3):e827-e841. doi: 10.1542/peds.2011-3552.
15. Moir, D., W. S. Rickert, G. Levasseur, Y. Larose, R. Maertens, P. White, and S. Desjardins. 2008. "A comparison of mainstream and sidestream marijuana and tobacco cigarette smoke produced under two machine smoking conditions." *Chem Res Toxicol* 21 (2):494-502. doi: 10.1021/tx700275p.
16. Tashkin, D. P. 2013. "Effects of marijuana smoking on the lung." *Ann Am Thorac Soc* 10 (3):239-47. doi: 10.1513/AnnalsATS.201212-127FR.

For more information about breastfeeding, visit: HealthyLincoln.org/Breastfeeding