



Section 6: Counseling Women about Cannabis (Marijuana) Use

1. Cannabis exposure during pregnancy

- The primary psychoactive constituent of cannabis is delta 9-tetrahydrocannabinol (Δ^9 -THC). Early THC exposure may affect fetal and newborn brain development due to its interaction with the brain's endocannabinoid system (Trezza, et al 2008)
- Children prenatally exposed to cannabis are at increased risk for memory, problem solving, and attention deficits (Goldschmidt, et al 2000; Richardson, et al, 2002)
- It is difficult to attribute causation due to potential impact of environmental factors including maternal nutrition and other substance exposure (Shempf, et al 2008)

Adapted from: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/can-marijuana-use-during-pregnancy-harm-baby>

In *Clinical Guidance for the Treatment of Pregnant and Parenting Women with Opioid Use Disorder and their Infants*, SAMHSA endorses abstinence from cannabis for either recreational or medicinal purposes during pregnancy and the postpartum (SAMHSA, 2018)

2. Cannabis exposure during breastfeeding

- Cannabis use while parenting can result in impaired ability to safely care for an infant
- Although more research is needed, potential risks of marijuana exposure through breastmilk are related to its ready bioavailability and known psychoactive properties
- THC accumulates in breastmilk due to its long half-life (25–57 hours) and its affinity to fat in the mother's milk. THC can be present in human milk up to 8 times the level in the mother's blood.
- THC is absorbed and metabolized by an infant, rapidly distributed to the infant's brain, and can be stored in an infant's fat tissue for weeks to months
- Breastfeeding is NOT recommended with daily or frequent use of cannabis

*The NNEPQIN **Breastfeeding Guidelines for Women with a Substance Use Disorder** further addresses breastfeeding with cannabis use.*

Additional Patient Resources

- Cannabis/Marijuana and pregnancy:
<http://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/marijuana.aspx>

Additional Provider Resources

- A summary of current research on marijuana use and Cannabis/Marijuana Use Disorder from the National Institute on Drug Abuse:
<https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/marijuana>