

PREGNANCY AND CANNABIS

Welcoming a new baby is an exciting time with lots of challenges and new things to learn. If you are currently using cannabis or have used cannabis during your pregnancy, there are some extra things you need to know.

What is cannabis?

Cannabis is a depressant drug that also has mild hallucinogenic effects. The main form of cannabis used in Australia is marijuana. Long-term cannabis use has been linked to anxiety and depression. If you are a heavy cannabis user it may affect your memory and ability to think clearly. It can also increase your risk of paranoia and hallucinations.

Caring for your new baby

Babies who are born to women who smoked during pregnancy and continue to smoke after birth have an increased risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). This increased risk applies to cigarette smoking as well as cannabis. Ask your maternal and child health nurse for more information about reducing the risk of SIDS for your baby.

Cannabis use can make people sleepy or make them sleep more heavily. After using cannabis, you may not hear your baby when you're asleep or be aware of your baby's presence if they sleep in the bed with you. It is important that you don't share a bed with your baby if you or your partner continue to use cannabis.

Breastfeeding and cannabis use

Breastfeeding is the best method of feeding your baby, it provides the correct food for their needs, helps their development and promotes a special bond between the two of you. It also has health benefits for you. However, cannabis can pass into your breastmilk and may be harmful to your child.

If you continue to use cannabis, make sure that you smoke away from your baby, outside the house, and not in the car. Smoking can reduce the amount of breastmilk you produce by up to 250ml per day. Your baby will need to be monitored by a paediatrician and a child and family health nurse to make sure that growth and development are on track.

Where to get more information

Pregnancy and a new baby can be great motivation to reduce or cease your use of cannabis. If you would like to speak to someone about referrals and support, you can talk to your maternal and child nurse or call Quitline on 137 848.

For more information, including information on pregnancy visit:
[http://www.thewomens.org.au/Cannabis?searchTerms\[\]=cannabis](http://www.thewomens.org.au/Cannabis?searchTerms[]=cannabis)

An initiative of the Centre for Community Child Health, The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne

For further information contact the Centre for Community Child Health,
The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne.
Phone 03 9345 6150 or Fax 03 9345 5900 www.rch.org.au/ccch

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