



Let's have a conversation about



# CANNABIS USE DURING PREGNANCY

and beyond



# PEOPLE WHO ARE PREGNANT, TRYING TO GET PREGNANT OR BREASTFEEDING

are encouraged not to use cannabis (marijuana) for the health of your baby. Whether you smoke, vape, or eat cannabis, one of the chemicals, THC, passes to your baby while you are pregnant and through breastmilk. While nothing beats an open conversation with your health care provider, here are some facts about the risks of cannabis use during pregnancy to help inform that next conversation.

## IS ANY AMOUNT SAFE?

There is no known safe amount of cannabis use during pregnancy. Because of the federal laws around cannabis, it is more difficult to do research on it. However, the studies that have been done have shown that cannabis use during pregnancy has negative outcomes on the developing baby. While cannabis is from a plant and is legal in some states, this does not make it safe to use during pregnancy because it still contains many chemicals including THC that can affect your baby's growth and development. There is no safer way to use cannabis because all routes (smoking, vaping, eating) lead to THC in your blood which passes directly to the baby through the placenta.

## HOW CAN CANNABIS USE AFFECT MY BABY?

Research shows that cannabis use during pregnancy can decrease a baby's birth weight and head size, and lead to lower muscle tone. Because THC gets concentrated in fat tissue including in the breasts, cannabis use during breastfeeding can make infants sleepier and lead to feeding problems and slower weight gain. Some studies show THC can negatively affect a baby's brain development, leading to delays in motor skills at one year, as well long-term behavioral and learning issues. After birth, infants whose parents or caregivers in the home use cannabis are at an increased risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

## WHAT ABOUT EDIBLES, VAPING AND OTHER CONCENTRATES?

While edibles, vaping and other concentrates may remove the potentially harmful effects of inhaling smoke, the THC from these products in your system still passes from you to your baby. With more states legalizing or decriminalizing cannabis use, it has become a big business leading to newer cultivating methods and higher concentrations of THC in these products. Unfortunately, more THC content can increase the negative effects on the developing baby.

## I USED CANNABIS BEFORE I KNEW I WAS PREGNANT. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

By stopping use when you found out you were pregnant, the negative effects on the developing baby will be lessened. If you continue to use cannabis regularly during pregnancy, please talk with a health care provider about supports for stopping.

## WHAT IF I CONTINUE TO USE CANNABIS?

If you do use cannabis while pregnant, the best thing to do is talk with your health care provider. Together, you can work to understand why you are using and the best course of action to be sure you move forward in the healthiest way possible for both you and your baby.

## I USE CANNABIS TO HELP WITH PREGNANCY RELATED SYMPTOMS, WHAT ARE OTHER OPTIONS?

Depending on your reason for using cannabis, other strategies to manage symptoms may help you avoid using it while pregnant. Exercise—even just taking a walk—releases endorphins to improve your mood and can help you sleep. There are safe over the counter and prescription medications to help with morning sickness. Meditation can reduce stress hormones and help relax tense muscles. Talk to your health care provider about these and other options to manage pregnancy related symptoms.

## WHAT ABOUT BREASTFEEDING?

The chemical THC found in cannabis is concentrated in fat cells and passes readily into breastmilk. Tests have shown THC can be present in breast milk within 20 minutes of using cannabis and is present at least 24 hours after. Because THC is stored in fat cells, it stays in your body longer than other substances, so pumping and dumping breastmilk after using cannabis doesn't work. The THC in cannabis can make infants sleepy and not feed as well so they can have problems gaining weight. It is best to avoid all methods of cannabis use while breastfeeding.

## WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

If you continue to use cannabis even when you don't want to or know you shouldn't or have tried to quit but can't, you may benefit from formal support to stop using. There are counselors, peer recovery coaches, and 12 step programs that may give you the support you need to stop. [VTHelpLink.org](http://VTHelpLink.org) has information about treatment options. Your health care provider is another resource to help find a care method that works for you.

## WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

Visit [VTHelpLink.org](http://VTHelpLink.org), call 802.565.LINK (5465) or talk to your health care provider.

For more information, there's no better resource than your health care provider. Remember, they're not there to judge. They're there to help you have the healthiest pregnancy possible by keeping the conversation going.