

CANNABIS AND PREGNANCY



Cannabis use during pregnancy or breastfeeding may lead to adverse health risks for pregnant people, unborn children, and newborns.

The chemical components of cannabis, including *tetrahydrocannabinol* (THC), could pass from you to your baby, causing potential harm. Organizations for healthcare providers, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration advise people who are pregnant or breastfeeding to not use cannabis in any form.

Like tobacco smoke, cannabis smoke contains many chemicals that can harm the development of unborn children, newborns, and older children. To learn more about secondhand cannabis smoke, see the Cannabis Control Authority's factsheet on the risks of [Secondhand Smoke Exposure](#).

Cannabis and Pregnancy

THC exposure during pregnancy could negatively affect your baby's development. Regular cannabis use during pregnancy may have the following effects on birth outcomes:

- Preterm delivery
- Small infant head size
- Low birth weight
- Small birth length
- Greater risk of still birth

Using cannabis while pregnant can harm you, as well. Those who use cannabis while pregnant may experience side effects such as:

- Impaired judgment, which could increase risk of injury
- Dizziness, which may increase risks of falls
- Lower levels of oxygen in the body, which may cause breathing problems

If you use cannabis, your baby may be exposed to THC through:



Your bloodstream and the placenta during pregnancy;



Your breastmilk; and/or



Secondhand smoke.

For additional educational resources, visit: cca.virginia.gov

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Cannabis use for medicinal purposes is not recommended for people who are pregnant or people planning to become pregnant. The ACOG reports there is no evidence that cannabis use during pregnancy can alleviate symptoms of pregnancy, such as morning sickness. Medical cannabis patients should consult with their doctor or health care provider for safe alternatives to use during pregnancy.

Cannabis and Breastfeeding

THC can remain in breastmilk for up to six weeks, increasing the risk of cannabis exposure to your baby. Cannabis use may also negatively affect prolactin, the hormone that helps produce breastmilk. Frequent cannabis users may see negative effects on the quality and amount of breastmilk they produce. The AAP, ACOG, and Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine advise people who are breastfeeding to avoid using cannabis.

THC exposure may negatively affect a newborn's brain development. Cannabis use during pregnancy and breastfeeding could lead to the following changes in your child's memory, learning, and behavior:

- Attention deficits
- Emotional disturbances
- Increased hyperactivity and impulsivity
- Sleep disorders
- Delays in motor development (crawling or walking)
- Increased likelihood of substance use

THC can stay in your breastmilk for several weeks. "Pumping and dumping" your breastmilk will not work to eliminate THC from your system.



Do you or a loved one need help?

Research on cannabis use during pregnancy and breastfeeding is limited. However, it is recommended that anyone who is pregnant, planning to be pregnant, or breastfeeding not use cannabis in any form. If you use cannabis and are pregnant or breastfeeding, please consult with your doctor or health care professional regarding health implications and potential alternatives.

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