

# MARIJUANA (CANNABIS) USE IN PREGNANCY: TAKING CARE OF YOU AND YOUR BABY

*Just because it is legal, does not mean it is safe for baby!*

## Health Effects of Marijuana During Pregnancy

Smoking or vaping marijuana can cause lung disease, memory, and mood problems for users. Marijuana use during pregnancy may also harm your baby.<sup>1,2</sup>

Some Potential Harms for the Baby Include:



- Long-term brain development, memory, learning, and behavior problems



- Increased risk of stillbirth



- Fetal growth restriction (baby does not gain enough weight before birth)



- Low birth weight



- Preterm birth (being born before 37 weeks of gestation)

## Health Effects of Marijuana While Breastfeeding

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends against using marijuana while breastfeeding. This is because chemicals from marijuana can pass through breastmilk and affect your baby's long-term development.<sup>1,2</sup>

## Legal Risks of Marijuana Use During Pregnancy

When people use marijuana during pregnancy, Michigan state law requires doctors to assess the baby. This may include performing a drug test on the newborn baby. If the drug test is positive or the baby has withdrawal symptoms, the doctor is required to file a report with Child Protective Services.<sup>3</sup> Child Protective Services is then required to make an assessment for child abuse and neglect. Additionally, marijuana is still illegal at the federal level.

## Testing Your Baby for Marijuana

Different clinics test for marijuana differently. For example, at Michigan Medicine, newborn stool tests are performed when pregnant people report use of marijuana after the first trimester of pregnancy. Below are some methods providers might use to test for marijuana:



- Urine drug tests: the newborn may test positive for up to a month since the pregnant individual's last use



- Newborn stool (meconium) tests: the newborn may test positive for up to five months after the pregnant individual's last use



## Getting Help to Stop Using Marijuana During Pregnancy

If you are using marijuana for nausea, your provider can recommend safer treatments for nausea. If you are using it to treat anxiety, depression, stress, or PTSD,<sup>4</sup> your provider can help with stress management, talk therapy, medication, or other supports. If you are using marijuana for recreation and find it difficult to stop on your own, here are treatments that can help:

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy** – a form of talk therapy that helps you develop strategies to cope with quitting marijuana
- **Contingency Management** – a treatment with positive rewards for quitting or cutting down
- **Motivational Enhancement** – a treatment to help identify your own motivation to quit

## What Can You Do Next?

- Ask for a social work referral - if you need help stopping or cutting down on marijuana, your office nurse, physician, or midwife can make a referral to a social worker who can help
- Talk to your primary care team – your health care professional can provide treatment (including medication), help you manage stress, or refer you to a specialist

## What If You Do Not Want to Stop Using Marijuana?

Medical and community health professionals can help you have the safest pregnancy possible, including cutting down on marijuana use even if you do not want to fully stop. It is important to understand that state law requires that providers perform drug testing and make a report to Child Protective Services if your newborn tests positive for marijuana.<sup>3</sup>

## Community Support Resources

- [Michigan Tobacco Quitlink](#) is not just for tobacco users, they offer FREE services to help people quit marijuana. Call 800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669) or go to [michigan.quitlogix.org](http://michigan.quitlogix.org) to get help quitting
- [Washtenaw County Community Mental Health \(WCCMH\)](#) provides substance use support and mental health services to all individuals in Washtenaw County, whether or not they have a diagnosis, insurance coverage, or the ability to pay for services. 24/7 phone services are available by calling 734-544-3050
- [Community Mental Health Partnership of Southeast Michigan \(CMHPSM\)](#), provides mental health services for individuals with substance use needs. Call 734-344-6079 or email [help@cmhpsm.org](mailto:help@cmhpsm.org)
- [Home of New Vision](#) is a Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health Treatment Agency that provides personalized recovery programs and specialized services to empower people to quit. Call 734-975-1602

### References:

1. Baranger DAA, Paul SE, Colbert SMC, et al. Association of Mental Health Burden With Prenatal Cannabis Exposure From Childhood to Early Adolescence: Longitudinal Findings From the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2022;176(12):1261–1265. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2022.3191.
2. Metz TD, Stickrath EH. Marijuana use in pregnancy and lactation: a review of the evidence. *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology.* 2015;213(6):761-778. doi:10.1016/j.ajog.2015.05.025.
3. State of Michigan. Children's Protective Services Manual. Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. 2023 Aug 1; <https://dhhs.michigan.gov/OLMWEB/EX/PS/Public/PSM/716-7.pdf>.
4. Vanstone M, Taneja S, Popoola A, Panday J, Greyson D, Lennox R, McDonald SD. Reasons for cannabis use during pregnancy and lactation: a qualitative study. *CMAJ.* 2021 Dec 20;193(50):E1906-E1914. doi: 10.1503/cmaj.211236. Erratum in: *CMAJ.* 2022 Mar 7;194(9):E342. PMID: 34930765; PMCID: PMC8687504.

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For more information visit: [washtenaw.org/marijuana](http://washtenaw.org/marijuana)



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