

STIMULANTS AND YOUR BABY

The Harmful Effects

Stimulants are drugs like MDMA, crack/cocaine and methamphetamine. When a pregnant woman takes a stimulant, she raises her heart rate and blood pressure while causing her body to cut off blood flow to her baby.

Taking stimulants while pregnant can stunt your baby's growth. It can also cause premature births or miscarriage.

That's not all - babies can be born addicted to the stimulants that their mother abused during pregnancy. Addicted babies experience painful withdrawal symptoms, like muscle spasms, sleeplessness and the possibility of future developmental issues.

LITTLE ADDICTS

The Effects of Narcotics on Your Baby

Narcotic drugs include heroin, morphine and prescription painkillers. These drugs are dangerous for everyone, but when pregnant women use them, they put their baby at risk for:

- Premature birth
- Low birth weight
- Internal bleeding in the brain

Often, these babies are addicted to narcotics - just like their mothers. Withdrawal symptoms for babies include stiff joints, vomiting and diarrhea

DEPRESSION HURTS

How Depressants Harm Your Baby

Depressants include alcohol, ecstasy, roofies (Rohypnol), barbiturates and prescription drugs like Valium. Abusing depressants during pregnancy can cause a variety of birth complications and health problems for your baby, including:

- Mental retardation
- Defects of the brain and spinal cord
- Convulsions and seizures
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)

Babies can be born already addicted to depressants. These newborns experience withdrawal symptoms such as muscle spasms, tremors and sleeplessness. However, the health problems that these babies will face in the future are much, much worse.

CHEMICALS IN THE WOMB

The Harmful Effects of Inhalants and Hallucinogens

People who abuse inhalants will huff things like glue, paint and household cleaners in order to get buzzed. While they're getting high, they're passing chemicals to their baby. This can cause side effects like:

- Slow growth and low birth weight
- Miscarriage and premature birth
- Birth defects, like cleft lips and clubbed feet
- Mental retardation and learning disabilities

Just like inhalants, hallucinogen abuse can cause a variety of birth defects. Taking drugs like LSD, PCP, or ketamine while pregnant can cause:

- Brain damage
- Birth defects of all body parts, including the face, brain, head, heart, arms and legs
- Low birth weight
- Poor muscle control
- Withdrawal symptoms

Drug abuse is bad for you, and even worse for your baby. It can lead to life-threatening complications and permanent health problems.

ADDICTED AND PREGNANT?

Getting Help for You and Your Child

If you're pregnant, it's vitally important to stop taking drugs immediately. Don't try to go through it alone - there are many free or low-cost options available to help you stay off drugs and keep you and your baby healthy.

If you need help quitting drugs and/or tobacco, try one of these options:

- Talking to your doctor about treatment
- Visiting NA, Narcotics Anonymous
- Calling a substance abuse hotline or treatment facility

You put your baby at risk every single time you take drugs, whether it's in the form of a cigarette, pill, joint, or needle. If you need help, ask for it. Reach out to your friends, family and healthcare professionals.

PREGNANCY AND DRUGS



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ADDICTED AT BIRTH



CHOKING ON TOBACCO SMOKE

How Tobacco Use Hurts Your Baby

Use of any kind of tobacco will negatively affect your baby's development. That includes cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, or snus. The most common pregnancy complication that accompanies tobacco use is low birth weight. Women who use tobacco during pregnancy are more likely to give birth to underweight babies than women who don't use tobacco.

That's not all, though. Tobacco can cause other serious side effects to your child, including:

- Birth defects of the heart, brain and facial structure
- Increased risk of miscarriage, premature birth and stillbirth
- Increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Risk of stunted physical, mental and behavioral development

How does tobacco use cause these types of problems? When someone smokes, the carbon monoxide replaces the oxygen that the baby needs. Plus, the nicotine found in all types of tobacco restricts the blood vessels of the uterus, cutting off all those nutrients and blood that the baby needs.

Cutting out tobacco use can prevent all of these side effects.

SECONDHAND SMOKE, FIRSHAND DANGER

Maybe you quit smoking when you got pregnant, but your husband, boyfriend, or other family members didn't. Breathing in their smoke can cause many of the same issues as continuing to smoke yourself.

Stay away from people who smoke, and avoid going to smoky places. Protect your baby.



ADDICTED AT BIRTH

Katie and Andy's Story

Katie gave birth to her son Andy on a Friday at 1 PM. Just a few hours later, the 22-year-old found herself being transferred to the clinic at the county jail. The charge? Reckless endangerment of a child.

No one knew that Katie had been shooting heroin during her pregnancy. She carefully hid her secret from family and friends, but her drug use became obvious when her son, Andy, was born addicted to heroin.

Andy remained in the pediatric intensive care unit for over six weeks after his mother was transferred to prison. After he was born, he began experiencing painful withdrawal symptoms, such as body tremors that made his tiny limbs go stiff with pain. He screamed and cried night and day, until the nurses had to administer small doses of morphine to ease the symptoms. Without medication, Andy's withdrawal symptoms could have turned into seizures or a stroke.

Every year, thousands of babies like Andy are born addicted to drugs, whether it's tobacco, narcotics, stimulants, or depressants. Each of these babies have to suffer through withdrawal symptoms once it's born. If they even make it to birth.

TEST YOURSELF!

Do you know the facts about drugs and pregnancy? Take this quiz to find out.

1. Prescription painkillers like Valium are okay to take while pregnant.
 True False
2. Babies can be born addicted to heroin, crack and depressants.
 True False
3. Using smokeless tobacco during pregnancy will not affect your baby's development.
 True False
4. Abusing inhalants or hallucinogens can cause a long list of birth defects.
 True False
5. Women who abuse drugs while pregnant can be charged with endangerment of a child.
 True False

Answers: 1) False; 2) True; 3) True; 4) False; 5) True

AN UNFAIR BEGINNING

Drug Abuse and Your Unborn Baby

Addiction. Mental retardation. Organ damage. Death.

You already know that doing drugs comes with consequences. When you abuse drugs, you put yourself at risk for scary short and long-term side effects, such as poor judgment, heart failure, memory problems, brain damage and death. Pregnant drug users put their babies at risk too. Women who abuse drugs while pregnant are doing more than getting high - they're gambling with their baby's health.

A pregnant drug user passes drugs through her body and into her baby's system. Because the baby's body isn't fully developed yet, the drugs have greater effects on the baby.

MARIJUANA AND PREGNANCY

A Losing Situation

Smoking pot while pregnant puts your baby's health at risk. Any drugs, marijuana included, that you put into your body will eventually cross the placenta and enter your baby's developing body. In other words, instead of getting oxygen and good nutrients like your baby is supposed to get through the placenta, he or she will receive smoke and dangerous chemicals when you get high.

Have you heard of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)? FAS occurs when a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, and it can lead to birth defects, learning disabilities and mental retardation. Research suggests that using marijuana during pregnancy can lead to similar side effects, plus shortened memory, Attention Deficit Disorder and delayed growth and development.

To avoid causing these health risks, the best guideline is this: When you're pregnant, you must say "no" to pot. Always.

