

PREVENTION & RECOVERY

Protect Yourself & Your Baby

Tell your healthcare provider about all prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, supplements, alcohol, nicotine, cannabis, and other substances you use.

- Do not stop prescribed medications without speaking with your healthcare provider.
- If you use opioids, ask about evidence-based treatment options.
- Carry naloxone if you or someone close to you may be at risk for opioid overdose.
- Avoid combining opioids with alcohol or benzodiazepines, which can increase overdose risk.
- Keep medications secured and away from children.
- Continue treatment and recovery support after delivery.

RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE

You do not have to wait for a crisis to ask for help.

Pregnancy and the postpartum period can be an important opportunity to connect with treatment and support. If you or someone you know is struggling:

- Talk with an OB/GYN, midwife, primary care provider, pediatrician, or addiction treatment professional.
- Ask about screening and treatment for substance use disorder.
- Connect with a recovery group or peer-support program.
- Ask about mental health services and postpartum support.
- Call the SAMHSA National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357).
- Visit [FindTreatment.gov](https://www.findtreatment.gov) to locate treatment resources.



TEST YOURSELF

1. Which statement about alcohol during pregnancy is correct?
 - A. Wine is safer than liquor
 - B. A small amount is always safe
 - C. There is no known safe amount or safe time to drink
 - D. Alcohol is only harmful during the third trimester
2. What should someone with opioid use disorder do during pregnancy?
 - A. Stop opioids suddenly
 - B. Avoid all medical treatment
 - C. Talk with a healthcare provider about evidence-based treatment
 - D. Wait until after delivery to seek help
3. Which medications are recommended treatment options for opioid use disorder during pregnancy?
 - A. Methadone and buprenorphine
 - B. Antibiotics and antihistamines
 - C. Sleeping pills
 - D. No medications are recommended
4. What should you do if someone shows signs of an opioid overdose?
 - A. Let them sleep
 - B. Give them water
 - C. Call 911 and give naloxone if available
 - D. Wait to see if they recover
5. What is one important reason people may avoid seeking treatment during pregnancy?
 - A. Treatment never works
 - B. Stigma and fear of judgment
 - C. Prenatal care cannot address substance use
 - D. Recovery is not possible during pregnancy

Answers: 1: C. 2: C. 3: A. 4: C. 5: B.



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STAY SAFE SERIES

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PERINATAL SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER



SUPPORT FOR YOU. CARE FOR YOUR BABY.
HOPE FOR RECOVERY.

UNDERSTANDING PERINATAL SUBSTANCE USE

Perinatal substance use disorder refers to a substance use disorder occurring during pregnancy or the postpartum period, including the first year after birth.

Substances that may affect pregnancy and infant health include:

- Alcohol
- Opioids, including fentanyl
- Cannabis
- Nicotine and tobacco
- Stimulants such as cocaine or methamphetamine
- Misused prescription medications

WHEN SUBSTANCE USE BECOMES A CONCERN

- Using a substance more often or in larger amounts than intended
- Having strong cravings or feeling unable to stop
- Continuing to use despite health, relationship, work, or family problems
- Spending significant time obtaining, using, or recovering from a substance
- Needing more of a substance to achieve the same effect
- Experiencing withdrawal when reducing or stopping
- Trying to cut back or quit but being unable to do so
- A substance use disorder is a medical condition—not a moral failure.



SUBSTANCE USE DURING PREGNANCY

Alcohol

There is no known safe amount or safe time to drink alcohol during pregnancy. Alcohol exposure can increase the risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, preterm birth, and fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs), which can cause lifelong developmental, behavioral, and physical effects.

If you have been drinking and discover you are pregnant, stopping at any point can still be beneficial. Talk with a healthcare provider for support.



Opioids & Fentanyl

Opioids, including prescription opioids, heroin, and illegally manufactured fentanyl—can create serious risks during pregnancy. Opioid use during pregnancy has been associated with:

- Preterm birth
- Poor fetal growth
- Stillbirth
- Maternal overdose
- Neonatal opioid withdrawal syndrome (NOWS)

Do not suddenly stop opioids during pregnancy without medical guidance. Rapid withdrawal can create serious risks, including fetal distress, preterm labor, and miscarriage. Evidence-based treatment can be safer than untreated opioid use disorder.



Cannabis & Nicotine

Cannabis use during pregnancy may affect fetal development and has been associated with pregnancy and newborn health concerns. Nicotine use—including cigarettes and e-cigarettes, increase risks such as preterm birth and low birth weight.

Talk with a healthcare provider before using cannabis, nicotine, or other substances during pregnancy.

WHY GETTING HELP MATTERS

Substance use during pregnancy can be complicated by stress, trauma, mental health concerns, housing instability, lack of transportation, stigma, and limited access to treatment.



These barriers are not a reason to avoid care. They are reasons to provide more support.

Fear of judgment or consequences can keep people from seeking prenatal care or treatment. Current research emphasizes the importance of compassionate, patient-centered care that reduces stigma and helps people stay connected to treatment.

Treatment Can Help

Treatment may include:

- Counseling or behavioral therapy
- Medication for substance use disorder
- Prenatal and postpartum medical care
- Mental health treatment
- Peer recovery support
- Case management and care coordination
- Transportation, housing, or other supportive services

For opioid use disorder, methadone and buprenorphine are recommended medications during pregnancy. Treatment should be individualized with a healthcare provider.

Remember:

Asking for help does not make you a bad parent. Seeking treatment is a step toward protecting your health and your baby's health.