

The Harms of Cannabis Use During Teen Pregnancy

Using cannabis during pregnancy hurts the baby and the mother. Its active chemical, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), easily crosses the placenta to enter the fetus's bloodstream. Leading medical organizations, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), strongly advise against using cannabis in any form—whether smoked, vaped, or eaten—at any stage of pregnancy. Here are some of the harms:

Immediate Birth Risks. Using cannabis while pregnant changes the baby's environment and increases the likelihood of critical birth complications:

- **Low birth weight:** Fetal growth restriction can prevent the baby from gaining enough weight before birth.
- **Preterm birth:** Smoking or consuming weed increases the risk of early delivery before 37 weeks.
- **Stillbirth:** Though still rare, studies show a statistical association with an elevated risk of fetal death.
- **Newborn distress:** Infants are more likely to experience lower muscle tone, tremors, and abnormal sleep patterns.

Long-Term Developmental Impacts. Because a baby's brain develops rapidly throughout the entire pregnancy, exposure to THC can disrupt normal nerve cell growth. This disruption often leads to challenges that appear later in childhood and adolescence:

- **Learning delays:** Difficulties with memory, problem-solving skills, and visual perception.
- **Behavioral issues:** Increased struggles with attention, impulse control, and hyperactivity.
- **Mental health:** A potentially higher risk of developing mental illness or substance use disorders as teenagers.

Risks for the Mother

- Higher chance of high blood pressure during pregnancy (preeclampsia).
- Higher risk of bleeding problems from the placenta.

Breastfeeding Concerns

- THC passes into breast milk and can affect a baby's motor development and alertness.
- Experts advise against using cannabis products while breastfeeding.

A Note on Morning Sickness. Many women consider using cannabis to treat severe pregnancy nausea. However, health experts emphasize that no amount of marijuana is safe for this purpose. If you are experiencing morning sickness, please consult a healthcare provider to find safer, proven medical treatments that will not harm your baby.

www.cdc.gov/cannabis/health-effects/cannabis-and-teens.html

