



Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women and Cannabis

It is legal for adults 21 or older to possess, consume and cultivate cannabis in California. Sale of cannabis from licensed retail outlets will become legal January 1, 2018. If you are 18 or older, you can use cannabis if you have a current qualifying physician's recommendation or a valid county-issued medical marijuana identification card. But, use of cannabis is not recommended for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, or who plan to become pregnant soon. Here are some important facts you should know to protect the health of your baby.

Cannabis Can Harm Your Baby

- Research shows that if you use cannabis while you are pregnant or breastfeeding:
 - Your baby may be born with a lower birth weight.^{1,2,3,4}
 - A low birth weight baby is more likely to have health problems, especially in the first year of life.
 - The growth and development of your baby's brain can be harmed.^{5,6}

How Cannabis Affects Your Baby

- No matter how you use cannabis (smoking, vaping, eating, or drinking), the active ingredient in cannabis, THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), will reach your baby in three ways:
 - Through your bloodstream and into the placenta (the organ that feeds your baby during pregnancy).⁷
 - Through your breast milk.^{8,9}

“Pumping and Dumping” doesn't work. THC is stored in fat cells and is slowly released over several weeks, so it stays in your breast milk.^{10,11}
 - Through secondhand smoke that enters your baby's lungs.¹²

No Amount of Cannabis is Safe

- Leading doctors' organizations such as the American College of Obstetricians¹⁴ and Gynecologists and the American Academy of Pediatrics¹⁴ recommend that:
 - If you are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant soon, discontinue use of cannabis.
 - If you already use cannabis for medicinal purposes, discontinue use in favor of an alternative treatment which research shows is safer during pregnancy.
 - Don't breathe cannabis smoke if you are pregnant. It is bad both for you and your baby because, like tobacco smoke, it lowers your oxygen levels, introduces toxins into your system and harms your lungs.¹²
- Talk to your doctor about any questions you have about cannabis.¹⁵



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- 4 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau. Child Health USA 2012. Rockville, Maryland: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013. <https://mchb.hrsa.gov/chusa12/hs/hsi/pages/lbwvlbw.html>
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- 14 American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement. The Impact of Marijuana Policies on Youth: Clinical, Research, and Legal Update Committee on Substance Abuse, Committee on Adolescence. March, 2015 doi: 10.1542/peds.2014-4146 <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/135/3/584>
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