

Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco Use During Pregnancy

Is drug, alcohol, and tobacco use during pregnancy a problem?

Drugs, alcohol, and smoking can harm your body and your brain. If you are pregnant, these substances can pass from you to your baby. They can cause problems for your baby before, during, and after birth. If you abuse drugs or alcohol, or if you smoke while you are pregnant, you are at risk for:

- Miscarriage
- Premature labor
- Stillbirth
- Giving birth to a child with birth defects

Illegal drugs

Illegal drugs are dangerous to you and your baby. Even if you just use drugs once in awhile, you are putting your health and your baby's health at risk. You may have a heart attack, seizures, or a stroke. Your baby may also have health problems such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or sudden infant death syndrome.

If you are addicted to heroin or cocaine, your baby can be born addicted. Your baby will then have withdrawal symptoms after birth.

If you use illegal drugs, get help to quit before you become pregnant. If you are already pregnant, get help now. Ask your healthcare provider for advice and a possible referral to a treatment program.

Medicines

Talk about medicines with your healthcare provider at your first prenatal visit. Some prescription drugs can harm an unborn baby. Check with your healthcare provider about any information that you find online. Be sure to tell anyone who prescribes medicine for you that you are pregnant.

Some nonprescription medicines are harmless. Others could hurt your baby. Check with your healthcare provider before you use any natural remedy or nonprescription medicine, including:

- Fever and pain medicine
- Antacids
- Sleeping pills
- Cold and cough medicines
- Medicines to treat diarrhea

Some medicines contain caffeine. Caffeine is also in coffee, tea, chocolate, some soft drinks, and some sports drinks. Too much caffeine may make it more likely that you will have a low-birth-weight baby or stillbirth. There are some reports that drinking a lot of caffeine may increase the risk of miscarriages. Talk to your healthcare provider about this.

Alcohol

While you are pregnant, drinking any amount of alcohol is not safe for your baby. Everything you eat and drink goes to the baby. The more alcohol you drink, the greater the danger to your baby.

If you drink while you are pregnant, your baby may be born with fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). FAS affects your child's growth and can cause health and mental problems.

To avoid any risk of problems from alcohol, do not drink while you are pregnant. The best time to stop drinking alcohol is before you get pregnant. If you are pregnant and still drinking, try to stop now. Ask for support from your family, friends, or healthcare provider to help stop drinking during your pregnancy.

Nicotine

If you smoke, or if you are exposed to secondhand smoke, you are more likely to have a very small baby. When you smoke, less oxygen gets to you and your baby. Your baby may have problems during labor and delivery. Your baby may also have health problems such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or sudden infant death syndrome.

If you are a smoker, try to stop now. If you stop smoking early in your pregnancy, your risks are about the same as someone who does not smoke. Ask for support from your family, friends, or healthcare provider to help stop smoking during your pregnancy.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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