

Patient information leaflet: Cannabis use in pregnancy

This leaflet is about the risks of using cannabis for you and your unborn baby and will give you information about where you can get help to quit.

In the past some pregnant women and even health professionals have viewed cannabis use as harmless in pregnancy and focused much more on the health risks of smoking tobacco. However, most cannabis available on the street today is much stronger than in the past. Recent surveys of confiscated cannabis samples found that over 80% of the UK market is made up of high tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), low cannabidiol (CBD) 'street cannabis'¹. THC is the chemical in cannabis that produces the pleasurable 'high', but increases the risk of dependency and problematic side-effects such as paranoia and psychosis when consumed in high quantities.

Although there is not much research about the effects of using cannabis in pregnancy on the unborn baby there is enough to suggest that it may be harmful to your unborn baby in pregnancy and well into childhood. The risks as we currently understand them are:

Risks for the baby:

THC crosses the placenta and will affect your unborn baby's development. This may put your baby at risk of:

- Learning, behavioural, mental health and substance abuse problems
- Being born with a low birth weight
- Being admitted to the neonatal unit because of health concerns

Risks for the mother:

Using cannabis may trigger mental health problems even when you have been well before, or it can worsen any preexisting mental health problems you already have. The younger you are when you start using cannabis, the greater the risk of mental health issues due to the effect of the THC on your developing brain²

¹ <https://cannabisinthe.uk/home>

² <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/parents-and-young-people/young-people/cannabis-and-mental-health-information-for-young-people>

What is recommended

As health professionals we recommend that you stop using cannabis. If you need help with this you can get help from your local addiction services. How to contact them is at the back of this leaflet. You can refer yourself or we can help you make contact with them.

Smoking tobacco

If you are also smoking tobacco it is also important for the health of your unborn baby that you quit smoking tobacco. We can support you with this; contact details for our service are below.

Keeping your baby safe

If you do not quit cannabis or you are finding it difficult and not accessing support, then we will have to consider how this is affecting your unborn baby and how it may affect your ability to be a parent and meet your baby's needs. If we have any concerns we may need to make a safeguarding referral to social services.

Contact details addiction services

County	Name of service	Contact details
Wiltshire	Turning Point	01225 341520
Bath and North East Somerset	Developing Health and Independence (DHI)	01225 329411
Somerset	Somerset Drug and Alcohol Partnership	somersetdas@cgl.org.uk 030 303 8788

Contact details smoking cessation services

County	Name of service	Contact details
Wiltshire	Bloom	01249 456539
Bath and North East Somerset	HIPS	07966528997
Somerset	Solutions for Health	08002461063

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath BA1 3NG
01225 428331 www.ruh.nhs.uk

Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656.

peoplehttp://www.dualdiagnosis.co.uk/uploads/documents/originals/cannabis-and-mental-health.pdf