

# Cannabis use in pregnancy

## Information for patients

This leaflet outlines the known risks of using cannabis in pregnancy for you and your unborn baby and offers information about how and where you can seek help to quit.

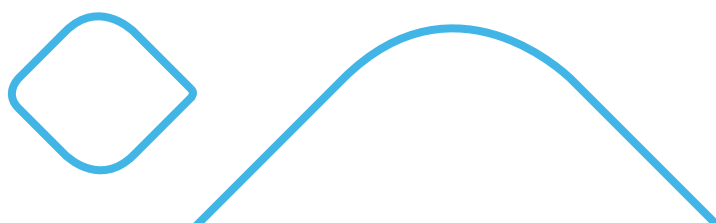
In the past cannabis use during pregnancy was deemed relatively harmless and not much was known about the potential risks to the mother or the growing baby. However, most of the cannabis available in the UK today is much stronger and contains higher levels of potentially harmful substances. It is believed around 80% of 'street cannabis' available in the UK is made up of 'high THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol), low CBD (cannabidiol)' products. THC is the chemical that produces the pleasurable 'high' but also increases the risk of dependency and problematic side-effects such as paranoia and psychosis when consumed regularly.

Research into the effects of maternal cannabis use during pregnancy is widening and we already have sufficient evidence to suggest it may cause harm to unborn babies whilst they are developing, but also well into their childhood. The risks as we currently understand them include;

### 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, behavioral, mental health and substance abuse problems
- Being born with a low birth weight
- Admission to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit with health concerns



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## Risks for the mother:

Using cannabis can trigger the onset of mental health problems for the first time and can heighten any pre-existing mental health issues you may 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 brain<sup>2</sup>

## What is recommended

As health professionals we recommend that you stop using cannabis. If you need help with this it is available from your local addiction services. Please see details of some of these services below. You can refer yourself or we can help you make contact with them.

### Tobacco Dependency

If you are also smoking tobacco it is essential for the health of your unborn baby that you quit as soon as possible. We can support you with this; contact details for our services can be found below. You can refer yourself or ask your midwife to do this for you.

## Our Duty to you and your baby

If you do not successfully quit using cannabis or you choose not to access support we have a professional obligation to consider how this will affect your unborn baby and how it may impact on your ability to parent once your baby is born. If we are concerned we may need to refer you to social services for ongoing support.

## Getting help and support with Cannabis Addiction

County	Service name	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	<a href="mailto:sdas@turning-point.co.uk">sdas@turning-point.co.uk</a> 0300 303 8788

## Getting help and support with Tobacco Dependency

County	Service name	Contact details
Wiltshire	The Bloom Project	<a href="mailto:Ruh-tr.bloomproject@nhs.net">Ruh-tr.bloomproject@nhs.net</a>
Bath and North East Somerset	HIPS	<a href="mailto:Ruh-tr.hipsteam@nhs.net">Ruh-tr.hipsteam@nhs.net</a>
Somerset	Smokefree Life Somerset	<a href="mailto:smokefreelife@somerset.gov.uk">smokefreelife@somerset.gov.uk</a>

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](mailto:ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net) or telephone 01225 825656

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