

Cannabis

Drug Information;

Cannabis is a drug that comes from the cannabis sativa plant. The active chemical is THC (Delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol). Cannabis is a depressant which slows the messages going to and from the brain to the body. Cannabis can also have mild hallucinogenic effects. The main form of cannabis used in Australia is marijuana. Long term use of cannabis has been linked to anxiety and depression. Heavy cannabis use can affect your memory and how clearly you think. It may also increase the risk of paranoia and hallucinations.

Effects on Pregnancy;

Cannabis use during pregnancy is harmful to your baby, however it is not associated with birth abnormalities. The effects of cannabis on your pregnancy are similar to that of tobacco smoking. Reduced oxygen and nutrition to your baby via the placenta may occur and result in reduced growth and development of your baby during pregnancy.

Regular cannabis use during pregnancy may increase the effects that other drugs and alcohol have on your developing baby. Because cannabis use is often combined with tobacco use, there is also increased risk to the developing baby due to the effects of tobacco smoke and nicotine.

Smoking during pregnancy has also been associated with an increased risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) and the development of asthma and breathing conditions in children. Cannabis use during pregnancy is associated with learning and behavioural difficulties in some pre school and young school age children.

Counselling;

Pregnancy is a good motivator to reduce or cease cannabis use. Counselling may assist you to:

- explore personal issues and make positive changes
- learn new ways to manage stress
- develop strategies to reduce or stop using cannabis and other drugs
- obtain a referral to support services
- access information about harm minimisation, in order to reduce the harm to yourself and your pregnancy
- obtain advice about parenting skills.

Pregnancy Care;

Talking about your cannabis use when you are pregnant can be difficult. However it is important that you talk to your health professional about your cannabis use in early pregnancy. If there is concern about your baby's growth, an ultrasound and monitoring will be organised by your doctor or midwife.

You may need dietary supplements such as iron and calcium throughout your pregnancy. All women should take folate before conceiving and for at least the first three months of their pregnancy.

Nausea, vomiting and constipation commonly occur in pregnancy. Speak with your midwife or doctor - they may refer you to a dietitian.

Eating well during pregnancy and whilst you are breastfeeding is important for the health of you and your baby.

Breastfeeding;

Breastfeeding is the best method of feeding your baby. It is also good for your health. To safely breastfeed your baby, it is recommended that you seek assistance from a health worker to reduce or cease your cannabis use.

Marijuana products, THC (Delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol) is the active chemical in cannabis. If you are using cannabis it will pass freely into breast milk and the THC levels can build up. THC attaches to fatty tissue and can remain in your baby's body for several weeks. For this reason, breastfeeding whilst using cannabis is not recommended. To safely breastfeed your baby, it is recommended that you seek assistance from a health professional to reduce or cease your cannabis use.

Infant Development and Parenting;

With the exception of alcohol, it is very difficult to prove that drug use in pregnancy results in any permanent long term behavioural or learning problems in children as they grow up. However, cannabis use during pregnancy is associated with learning and behavioural difficulties in some pre school and school age children.'

Sometimes disagreements over drug use can cause family arguments and affect personal relationships and it is therefore important to consider the effects that this can have on children. Furthermore, long term use of cannabis has been linked to depression and lack of motivation and this may also effect your parenting.

Care of Infant;

Following birth, your baby will be seen by a paediatric doctor to ensure he/she is well. Some babies may be irritable, unsettled and have feeding difficulties for a period of time following birth. If you have been using cannabis during your pregnancy. Your baby may need to stay in hospital a little longer than usual to ensure he/she is settled, feeding well and gaining weight.

If you smoke cannabis, co-sleeping with your baby is not recommended as drugs and/or alcohol can make you sleep more deeply. You may be less aware of where your baby is in your bed and less responsive to your baby's needs. Please refer to SIDS information below.

Long term use of cannabis has been linked to depression and lack of motivation and this may affect your parenting.

It is important that you provide a smoke free environment for your baby at all times.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome;

SIDS is the sudden unexpected death of a baby from no known cause. It is the most common cause of death for infants in Australia between the ages of one and twelve months. The risk of SIDS is greater if you smoke or use drugs and alcohol during pregnancy or after your baby is born.

For more information, speak with your midwife or doctor or contact SIDS and Kids by phoning, for the cost of a local call, 1300 308 307 or log on to <http://www.sidsandkids.org>

Other services;

DirectLine is part of Turning Point's statewide telephone service network, providing 24-hour, seven day counselling, information and referral to alcohol and drug treatment and support services throughout Victoria. DirectLine is a free, anonymous and confidential service.