

SAMPLE PATIENT ORIENTATION LETTER FOR SUBSTANCE USE SCREENING

Congratulations!

Anticipating your birth experience is an exciting time, but sometimes it can also feel overwhelming. We are here to be a resource for you and your baby and to support you through your pregnancy. An important part of prenatal care is identifying any risks that might exist for you, your pregnancy, or for your baby after birth. These might include medical conditions such as diabetes, asthma, depression or other issues that might make it hard to take care of yourself.

Substance use is one concern that could affect the care of you and your baby. Therefore, we ask all of our patients about the use of tobacco, alcohol, or drugs at the first prenatal visit, in the second trimester, and again in the third trimester.

Here are some facts you may not know about substance use during pregnancy:

- Smoking cigarettes and other forms of tobacco may decrease the flow of blood and oxygen to the placenta, causing low birth weight and preterm birth
- Alcohol may cause birth defects and problems with brain development
- Other drugs, like opioids, heroin, or oxycodone, cause symptoms of withdrawal in newborn
- Marijuana may cause problems with learning and behavior
- Drug and alcohol use may affect your ability to care for your newborn baby

If you are experiencing challenges with substance use, this is the ideal time for us to connect you to treatment services and available community resources. We can be the extra hand you need to help guide you through your journey to recovery and optimal health through your pregnancy. Research shows that the earlier you can begin treatment for substance use, the healthier you and your baby can be during and after pregnancy. We will always provide accurate and honest information you can trust. Thank you for including us in your pregnancy story and allowing us to partner with you.

The Indiana Department of Health has specialists to help pregnant patients with important resources to promote healthy families at the [MCH Moms Helpline – 1-844-MCH-MOMS \(1-844-624-6667\)](tel:1-844-MCH-MOMS)).

[2-1-1](tel:2-1-1) or [\(866\) 211-9966](tel:866-211-9966) is a free and confidential service available 24 hours a days, 7 days a week, to help find any local resources you may need.

Are you ready to stop smoking? This FREE service is available to Indiana residents that make the call. Simply call [1-800-QUIT-NOW \(1-800-784-8669\)](tel:1-800-QUIT-NOW) or visit QuitNowIndiana.com.

SAMPLE PATIENT LETTER WHEN IDENTIFIED POSITIVE VERBAL OR URINE SCREEN

Anticipating your birth experience is an exciting time, but sometimes it can also feel overwhelming. We are here as a resource for you and your baby and to support you through your pregnancy. An important part of prenatal care is identifying any risks that might exist for you, your pregnancy, or for your baby after birth. These might include medical conditions such as diabetes, asthma, depression or other issues that might make it hard to take care of yourself.

Substance use is one concern that could affect the care of you and your baby. When patients are pregnant and using substances like pain pills, marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamines, heroin, tobacco, or alcohol, we know that getting help is extremely important. Decreasing drug and alcohol use in pregnancy will increase the chances of having a healthier pregnancy and baby.

It's best when health care providers and patients work together to create a plan for the patient to stop using drugs and alcohol. Depending on the circumstances, the plan may include the following:

- Finding a safe living environment
- Starting medications
- Peer recovery support/services
- Seeing a mental health specialist
- Going to community recovery support meetings (12 Step, Smart Recovery, Celebrate Recovery etc.)
- Counseling

In addition to regular prenatal visits, patients with substance use disorders may need additional care while pregnant. The ultimate goal is to set every patient up for success in life and in parenting their baby. We know this can be scary to talk about, and there can be a fear that your baby will be “taken” from you. Our commitment to you is that we will always work with you to establish a supportive team to develop a plan of safe care for you and your baby.

Research shows us that the earlier a pregnant patient begins treatment for substance use disorder, the better the environment is for the baby to thrive and grow. Babies who are exposed to drugs or alcohol during pregnancy can experience withdrawal symptoms, heart or brain abnormalities, physical defects, learning disabilities, cognitive or behavioral problems, growth restriction, or even death. However, our goal is to partner together for a safe pregnancy and a healthy outcome for you and your baby. We look forward to walking with you through your pregnancy journey.

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