



Indiana State Department of Health

Your Pregnancy: What You Should Know About Over The Counter Medicines, Herbs, Supplements And Other Substances.



When you are pregnant, everything you take into your body may affect you and your unborn baby. When you take prescribed medications, smoke, drink or take drugs, you may pass harmful chemicals to your baby.

Why should you care?

Babies that are exposed to these substances may:

- Be born too soon and too small which can affect their health for life;
- Have an increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS);
- Be born physically dependent on the substance and may go through withdrawal treatment before leaving the hospital;
- Have lasting birth defects like Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS); or
- Have growth, learning and behavior problems

If you know about the risks of these substances to your baby, you can make healthier choices.

What substances are unsafe?

Since lots of substances can affect your baby during pregnancy, tell your doctor

about anything that you are taking. These include **over-the-counter medicines, prescription medicines, street drugs, tobacco, alcohol, herbs and supplements.** You and your doctor are a team working to get you and your baby as healthy as possible.

Some substances may be risky during pregnancy – and can cause problems for both you and your baby if used:

- **Alcohol:** *When you drink alcohol, so does your baby. No amount of alcohol is safe for baby during pregnancy and can result in lasting birth defects. Stop drinking as soon as you know you are pregnant.*
- **Tobacco:** *Smoking during pregnancy increases your chance of miscarriage, stillbirth, and preterm labor. As a result of the nicotine and toxins contained in tobacco, your baby is more likely to be born too small and has an increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).*
- **E-Cigarettes:** *Electronic smoking devices, including “e-cigs,” “vape pens,” and “hookah pens,” are designed to deliver nicotine without burning tobacco. These products are not recommended for quitting smoking. These products contain nicotine and toxins that are known to cause cancer.*
- **Marijuana:** *This drug increases your chance of preterm labor. It also puts your baby at risk for learning problems later in life.*
- **Opioids:** *(street drugs like heroin; prescription pain medications like codeine, morphine, methadone, Vicodin, Percocet, Oxycontin, Demerol, Suboxone, Subutex) Opioids are linked to increased risk of miscarriage and premature birth. Babies exposed to opioids may be smaller than normal and have learning and behavior*



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problems. They may also go through withdrawal immediately after birth or in the first few weeks of life.

- **Benzodiazepines:** (prescription medications for anxiety and seizures, and sleeping pills, such as Xanax, Valium, Klonopin, Ativan). If you take this drug during pregnancy, your baby may go through withdrawal after birth.
- **Barbiturates:** Prescription medications used mainly for seizure control called Phenobarbital, Seconal, or Fioricet.
- **Prescription medications:** Medications used to treat depression and anxiety, such as Prozac, Zoloft, etc.) Ask your doctor which medication is safest to use in pregnancy.
- **Cocaine and crack:** Taken during pregnancy, cocaine increases the risk of life-threatening problems for you and your baby. You can have seizures and breathing problems. Your pregnancy can end in miscarriage. Your baby may have an increased risk of birth defects, premature birth, and SIDS.
- **Amphetamines:** (street drugs like ecstasy and meth; prescription medications for ADD and ADHD such as Adderall, Ritalin, and Concerta). Babies exposed to these drugs may have learning and memory problems.
- **Inhalants:** Huffing puts you at risk for seizures, coma, and life-threatening breathing problems. It puts your baby at risk for birth defects, low birth weight, and learning problems.
- **Hallucinogens:** (PCP, LSD, Shrooms). Exposure to this type of drug may cause your baby to go through withdrawal after birth. It also increases the risk of learning, emotional, and behavior problems in your child.

What do I do if I'm using any of these substances? The first thing to do is tell your doctor what you are using. That way, your doctor can work with you to come up with the safest plan for you and your

baby, both during pregnancy and when baby is born. If your doctor has prescribed something for you, make sure the doctor knows you are pregnant.

DO NOT stop taking illegal drugs or prescription medications without talking to your doctor. Stopping some substances suddenly can be more harmful than gradually reducing use or replacing the substance with something healthier for your pregnancy. Your doctor will help

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If you are using tobacco, you can call the Indiana Tobacco Quitline at 800-784-8669 to get free help quitting.

What if I have a prescription?

Tell your doctor about any prescription you are taking. Your doctor will help you decide if taking that medication is safe while you are pregnant or help find a different, safer medication.

What if I am using something illegal?

This is the most important time to talk to your doctor. You and your doctor are a team working to get you and your baby as healthy as possible. Being truthful about what you are using will help the doctor:

- Help you understand the risks
- Help you quit the safe way
- Watch your pregnancy more closely
- Plan for any special care your baby might need after delivery

For more support and information

- Indiana Family HelpLine or Your Local 211: Call 855-435-7178 or 211 for help finding a doctor or other services you need.
- The MothertoBaby phone line: 866-626-6847. Call this number to get immediate, free advice about the safety of any



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substance during pregnancy or breastfeeding.

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: 1-800-662-HELP (English, Spanish)
www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov
Call or access this service to locate treatment programs (mental health, drug, alcohol) in your area.
- For nutrition help contact the Purdue Extension Service about the Have a Healthy Baby (HHB) program. 1-888-EXT-INFO (1-888-398-4636).