

Marijuana and Breastfeeding

Breastmilk is the best food for babies. However, if breastfeeding women use marijuana it passes into their breastmilk, which raises concerns about possible harm to their babies. For this reason, marijuana use while breastfeeding is not recommended.

This handout provides information to help you decide about marijuana use while breastfeeding.

What are the effects of marijuana on a baby?

Marijuana contains many substances, but the main ingredient is THC (TetraHydroCannabinol). When a mother inhales or eats marijuana, THC goes into her breastmilk. Research suggests that frequent use of marijuana results in higher amounts of THC in breastmilk.

During breastfeeding THC is passed to the baby. THC stays in the baby's body for up to 3 weeks.

Although the effect of THC on breastfeeding babies has not been well studied, these results have been reported:

- Increased tremors (shaking)
- Poor sucking
- Less feeding time
- Slow weight gain
- Delayed motor development

What does the research say?

To read research findings and guidelines, go to the websites listed on the next page.

The long term effects of exposure to THC at a time when a baby's brain is still forming is not known. Marijuana may cause lasting changes in thinking, learning, behaviour and mental health.

What are the effects of marijuana on a mother?

With recreational or medicinal use, marijuana can affect mood and judgment. This may affect a mother's ability to breastfeed and care for her child safely.

Where can I get more information?

For more information or health advice, talk with your doctor or a lactation consultant.

To read the research findings or guidelines for health care providers visit these websites:

- Motherisk - The Hospital for Sick Children. (2005). Marijuana use and breastfeeding.
www.motherisk.org/prof/updatesDetail.jsp?content_id=724
- Miller, C. (2012). Marijuana use and breastfeeding. *Clinical Lactation*. 3(3): 102-107.
www.clinicallactation.org/sites/default/files/articlepdf/CL3-3miller.pdf
- College of Family Physicians of Canada (2014). Authorizing dried cannabis for chronic pain or anxiety.
www.cfpc.ca/uploadedFiles/Resources/PDFs/Authorizing%20Dried%20Cannabis%20for%20Chronic%20Pain%20or%20Anxiety.pdf
- Health Canada. (2013). Information for health care professionals: Cannabis (marihuana, marijuana) and the cannabinoids.
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/marihuana/med/infoprof-eng.php
- Provincial Council on Maternal and Child Health. (2010). Breastfeeding policy template for hospitals.
www.pcmch.on.ca/sites/default/files/Breastfeeding%20Policy%20Template%20-%20Hospitals_0.pdf