

Pregnancy: Substance Use

When you found out you were pregnant, what did you think?

If any of your thoughts had to do with quitting alcohol, tobacco, or drugs, you're already thinking about your health and the health of your pregnancy.

Substance use can cause problems throughout pregnancy and after.

These problems can include pregnancy loss or early labor.

The infant may have low birth weight or problems with their heart, lungs, or brain.

A child may also have lifelong learning, emotional, or physical problems.

So there are a lot of reasons to stop using.

When you're pregnant, it isn't safe to smoke, vape, or use any nicotine products or to use alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs.

Quitting is best, but if you can't quit try to cut back as much as you can.

Remember, almost everyone needs help quitting, especially when it comes to substances like opioids. And it's part of good health care.

You can start by finding a doctor or midwife you're comfortable with—comfortable enough to talk openly about anything, including your substance use. This can help them take better care of you.

It can take courage to talk to your doctor or midwife about everything that's going on in your life. So you can always ask a friend, a loved one, or your partner to be with you for support during prenatal visits.

Together, you and your doctor or midwife can decide if you need treatment and what kind.

Treatment can include counseling.

Joining a support group can help too. Look for a group that is kind and helpful about substance use and pregnancy.

Your doctor may also prescribe medicines to help you quit and to help you get through any withdrawal symptoms. If you use opioids like oxycontin or heroin, your doctor can prescribe safer medicines or help you find another doctor who can.

Now, some areas have laws about pregnancy and substance use. But your doctor or midwife's priority is to care for your health and to help you get treatment.

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Take a little time to explore treatment programs in your area. In the United States, you can start with the national Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration help line at 1-800-662-HELP or online.

Something else to remember is that you can call your doctor or midwife if you're experiencing any uncomfortable, lasting feelings like anxiety, sadness, or depression.

Now you or someone in your household may never need it, but you might ask your doctor about a naloxone rescue kit. It's another way to protect yourself and others in case of an opioid overdose.

You know yourself best.

If you know you're using substances that could hurt your pregnancy, reach out for help.

With treatment and support, you're giving yourself the best chance for a healthy pregnancy.