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# Thinking about using cannabis before or during pregnancy?

Get the current facts about using cannabis for non-medical purposes during pregnancy and the health effects it can cause a growing child. Talk with your health care provider about information on cannabis for medical purposes.

## About cannabis

Cannabis is also known as marijuana, weed and pot. It has more than 700 chemical compounds. Hash and hash oil also come from the cannabis plant.

- ❖ Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the chemical compound that makes people feel high.
- ❖ THC content in cannabis has increased over the past several years.
- ❖ Cannabidiol (CBD) is another chemical compound known for its therapeutic use for pain, inflammation and anxiety.
- ❖ CBD does not make you feel high.
- ❖ CBD products may contain THC.

## Risks of using cannabis

**Second-hand cannabis smoke can be harmful.** It is safest not to smoke or vapourize cannabis at home or in a car.

**Using cannabis daily, or almost daily, may have effects that last for several weeks, years, or never fully go away, even after stopping use.** Some people may have a higher risk of:

- ❖ Developing a mental health problem
- ❖ Having an existing mental health problem worsen
- ❖ Having psychotic episodes

More research is needed to clearly understand all the possible health effects of cannabis use.

🌿 **Until more is known about the short and long-term effects of cannabis, it is safest to avoid using cannabis when pregnant and breastfeeding.**



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**Cannabis in foods or drinks can make people feel higher than expected.** Because the effects of cannabis are not felt right away but can appear hours later, people may take more cannabis than they had planned.

- ❖ The body has to digest the cannabis before feeling the effects.
- ❖ The signs and symptoms can vary from mild to severe.

## Before pregnancy

If thinking about getting pregnant, start prenatal care early. Cannabis use may affect:

- ❖ Ability to get pregnant
- ❖ Menstrual cycle
- ❖ Sperm count and quality

## During pregnancy

**Cannabis is not recommended to treat morning sickness or for medical purposes during pregnancy.** Ask a health care provider about safer options to feel better. To know more, refer to the web link *Nausea and Vomiting* on page 4.

- ❖ The more cannabis is taken during pregnancy, the more it affects the baby's developing brain.
- ❖ Cannabis use may also affect a mother's health during and after pregnancy.

**🌿 There is no known safe amount of cannabis use during pregnancy.**



**If using cannabis during pregnancy, a newborn has more risk of:**

- ❖ Lower birth weight
- ❖ Lower alertness

These risks can lead to health problems for a growing child.

**🌿 Although cannabis is a natural plant, it doesn't make it safe during pregnancy.**

## **Risks to a child's brain development**

**Use of cannabis during pregnancy may affect a child's brain development, behaviour and mental health into adolescence and early adulthood.** The effects may be permanent. If a mother uses cannabis daily, some of the risks for the child may be:



### **Age 0 - 3 years:**

- ❖ Difficulty calming down
- ❖ Exaggerated startles
- ❖ Sleep problems

### **Age 3 - 6 years:**

- ❖ Poorer memory
- ❖ More impulsive
- ❖ Less attentive
- ❖ Less able to understand and follow instructions

### **Age 6 - 10 years:**

- ❖ More hyperactive and impulsive
- ❖ More difficulty learning
- ❖ Symptoms of depression and anxiety
- ❖ More difficulty making decisions
- ❖ Less attentive

### **Age 14 - 18 years:**

- ❖ Poorer school performance
- ❖ Delinquency problems
- ❖ May try and/or use cannabis earlier
- ❖ Continue to be hyperactive, impulsive and less attentive

## Before baby arrives

**Talk to your health care provider about breastfeeding.** Cannabis passes into the breast milk. It can be stored in your baby's fat cells and brain for weeks.

- ❖ Breastfeeding is the healthiest choice for your baby.
- ❖ If you need help to reduce or to stop cannabis use, ask your health care provider about support and services in your region.

🍃 **If you are unable to stop using cannabis completely, try using less, and less often.**

## Learn about the effects of cannabis as new information becomes available:

- ❖ Cannabis in Canada. Get the facts [www.canada.ca/cannabis](http://www.canada.ca/cannabis)
- ❖ Thinking of using cannabis while parenting? [www.canada.ca/cannabis](http://www.canada.ca/cannabis)
- ❖ Are you pregnant or considering pregnancy? [www.pregnancyinfo.ca](http://www.pregnancyinfo.ca)
- ❖ Nausea and vomiting [www.pregnancyinfo.ca/nausea-and-vomiting](http://www.pregnancyinfo.ca/nausea-and-vomiting)
- ❖ Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines [www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca)



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**best start**  
**meilleur départ**  
Resource Centre/Centre de ressources  
by/par health **nexus** santé

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