

pregnancy may slow fetal growth and slightly decrease the length of pregnancy (possibly increasing the risk of premature delivery). Both of these factors can increase a woman's chance of having a low-birthweight baby. These effects are seen mainly in women who use marijuana regularly (six or more times a week). After delivery, some babies who were regularly exposed to marijuana in the womb appear to undergo withdrawal-like symptoms including excessive crying and trembling. Couples who are planning pregnancy also should keep in mind that marijuana can reduce fertility in both men and women, making it more difficult to conceive.

What are the risks with use of Ecstasy and other amphetamines during pregnancy? One small study did find a possible increase in congenital heart defects and, in females only, of a skeletal defect called clubfoot. Babies exposed to Ecstasy before birth also may face some of the same risks as babies exposed to other types of amphetamines.

Another commonly abused amphetamine is methylamphetamine, also known as speed, ice, crank and crystal meth. Some, but not all, studies suggest that this drug may cause an increased risk of birth defects, including cleft palate, and heart and limb defects. premature delivery, and excessive bleeding in the mother following delivery. After birth, babies who were exposed to amphetamines appear to undergo withdrawal-like symptoms, including jitteriness, drowsiness and breathing problems.

What are the risks with use of heroin during pregnancy?When a pregnant woman uses heroin, she and her baby may face many serious complications. Common pregnancy complications associated with heroin use include miscarriage, placental abruption, poor fetal growth, premature rupture of the membranes, many as half of all babies of heroin users are born with low birthweight. These babies, most of whom are premature, often suffer from serious prematurity-related health problems during the newborn period, including breathing problems and brain bleeds, sometimes leading to lifelong disabilities.

Most babies of heroin users suffer from withdrawal symptoms after birth, including fever, sneezing, trembling, irritability, diarrhea, vomiting, continual

crying and, occasionally, seizures. Babies exposed to heroin before birth also face a ten-fold increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

A pregnant woman who uses heroin should not attempt to suddenly stop taking the drug. This can put her baby at increased risk of miscarriage or premature birth. She should consult a doctor or drug treatment center about treatment with a drug called methadone. Although infants born to mothers taking methadone also may show some signs of dependence on the drug, they can be safely treated in the nursery and generally do far better than babies born to women who continue to use heroin. – March of Dimes

Where can I get help??

Retreat Healthcare– 1-800-Retreat

**Health Care and Rehabilitation Services of South-eastern Vermont- 1-888-888-5144
(802)885-5781**

**Alcoholics Anonymous– Answering Service,
Springfield, VT -802 885-8281**

**All information is from The March of Dimes
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*What is substance
abuse and it's effects
on pregnancy.*

What are some signs of Substance Abuse?

In our drug-oriented world, it seems as if there is a pill available to soothe any possible discomfort. If you have a headache, you can reach into your medicine cabinet for some aspirin or acetaminophen to relieve the pain. If you are anxious, or have trouble sleeping, you can take a couple of tranquilizers. If you are upset by work or marital problems, you can drown your sorrows in a stiff drink. It is not surprising, therefore, that many people have problems with drug addiction.

Addiction is said to exist when the body becomes accustomed to the presence of a foreign substance that it can no longer function properly if the substance is withdrawn. This is why a person who is addicted to a drug or alcohol experiences withdrawal symptoms if suddenly deprived of it.

Some signs of addiction can be:

- Decreased desire to work and/or socialize.
- Extreme drowsiness.
- Inattentiveness.
- Frequent mood swings.
- Restlessness.
- Personality changes.
- Loss of appetite.
- Desire to be alone.
- Losing tempers easily.
- May experience crying spells.
- Slow, slurred speech.
- The pupils of the eyes may also change

What can substance use do to my baby?

Smoking anything can cause a variety of issues to the baby. Anytime you lessen oxygen intake and inhale carcinogens and smoke your baby is breathing that in.

- Low birth weight
- Intrauterine (inside the uterus) growth delay
- Preterm labor
- Premature rupture of membranes (water bag), which may lead to preterm delivery or an infection affecting the baby
- Increased rates of stillbirths, miscarriages, and ectopic (outside the uterus) pregnancy
- Complications during delivery

Alcohol

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause physical and mental birth defects. Each year, more than 40,000 babies are born with some degree of alcohol related damage. Although many women are aware that heavy drinking during pregnancy can cause birth defects, many do not realize that moderate—or even light—drinking also may harm the fetus.

In fact, no level of alcohol use during pregnancy has been proven safe. Therefore, it is recommended that pregnant women do not drink any alcohol, including beer, wine, wine coolers and hard liquor, throughout their pregnancy and while nursing. Because women often do not know they are pregnant for a few months, women who may be pregnant or those who are attempting to become pregnant should not drink alcoholic beverages.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is one of the most common known causes of mental retardation, and the only cause that is entirely preventable. Babies with classic FAS are abnormally small at birth and usually do not catch up on growth as they get older. They may have small eyes, a short or upturned nose and small, flat cheeks. Their organs, especially the heart, may not form properly. Many babies with FAS also have a brain that is small and abnormally

formed, and most have some degree of mental disability. Many have poor coordination and a short attention span and exhibit behavioral problems.

The effects of FAS last a lifetime. Even if not mentally retarded, adolescents and adults with FAS have varying degrees of psychological and behavioral problems and often find it difficult to hold down a job and live independently.

Can heavy drinking by the father contribute to FAS? To date, there is no proof that heavy drinking by the father can cause FAS. There is, however, men who stop drinking during their partner's pregnancy also help the partner avoid alcohol. -March of Dimes

Drugs What are the risks with use of cocaine during pregnancy?

Cocaine use during pregnancy can affect a pregnant woman and her unborn baby in many ways. During the early months of pregnancy, it may increase the risk of miscarriage. Later in pregnancy, it can trigger preterm labor (labor that occurs before 37 weeks of pregnancy) or cause the baby to grow poorly. As a result, cocaine-exposed babies are more likely than unexposed babies to be born with low birth weight (less than 5½ pounds). Low-birth weight babies are 20 times more likely to die in their first month of life than normal-weight babies, and face an increased risk of lifelong disabilities such as mental retardation and cerebral palsy. Cocaine-exposed babies also tend to have smaller heads, which generally reflect smaller brains.

What are the risks with use of marijuana during pregnancy? Some studies suggest that use of marijuana during