

## Alcohol and Other Drugs Can Harm an Unborn and Newborn Baby

Every pregnant woman hopes her baby will be born perfectly healthy. There are many things that a woman can do to help ensure that this happens. In addition to regular check-ups during pregnancy and a nutritious diet, an expectant mother should also be extremely careful about the kinds and amounts of all drugs she takes - including alcohol, illicit drugs, and drugs available at the pharmacy or grocery store.



**STOP**

**If you are pregnant or trying to become pregnant, talk to your health care provider to ensure it is safe before taking, drinking, or smoking any substance.**

**If you need help or are struggling with substance abuse, CALL:**

### YOUR DOCTOR

If you do not have a doctor, you can get a listing of local doctors from the physicians' referral services at your local hospital, your insurance company, your local health department, or the United Way of Okaloosa and Walton Counties by dialing 211.

### COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Okaloosa County Health Department ..... 850-833-9240  
Walton County Health Department ..... 850-892-8045

### SUBSTANCE ABUSE CENTERS

Substance Abuse Hotline ..... 1-800-662-HELP  
Bridgeway Center ..... 850-833-7500  
Chautauqua Healthcare Service ..... 850-833-3870  
CDAC Behavioral Health ..... 850-434-2724  
Lakeview Center ..... 850-469-3500  
Mobile Response Team ..... 866-517-7766

**For a list of resources including:**  
OB/GYN Providers, Counseling and Support Groups, Emergency Hotlines, Assistance, and more...

Call the  
**United Way of Okaloosa and Walton Counties**  
by dialing 211.



Check out the  
**Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties' Family Resource Directory**  
[www.healthystartokawalton.org](http://www.healthystartokawalton.org)



### References:

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## DRUG-FREE MOTHERS MEAN HEALTHY BABIES

**The Effects of Alcohol and Drugs on the Unborn and Newborn Baby**



*Publication brought to you by*



**The Healthy Start Coalition of Okaloosa and Walton Counties**

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[www.healthystartokawalton.org](http://www.healthystartokawalton.org)

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## Here are some ways that alcohol and drugs can affect your baby:

### ALCOHOL

Alcohol passes freely from mother to baby through the umbilical cord. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause a range of risks and lifelong disabilities. This is called **Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)**.

#### **FAS Symptoms include:**

- growth deficiencies (small body size and weight)
- skeletal deformities (curved spine and missing fingers or toes)
- facial abnormalities (drooping eyelids, small jaw, nearsightedness)
- organ deformities (heart murmurs and kidney or urinary defects)
- central nervous system handicaps (small brain, mental retardation, hyperactivity)
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

FAS is a leading cause of mental retardation in the United States. There is no known amount of alcohol that is safe during pregnancy. It is never too late to stop drinking – whenever drinking is stopped during pregnancy, the risks are lowered.<sup>4</sup>

### NICOTINE

Nicotine is a stimulant drug found in many products such as cigarettes, cigars, tobacco, chewing tobacco (dip), snuff, and e-cigarettes (vapes). **Women who smoke or use any of these products while pregnant have a higher percentage of:**

- stillborn babies
- miscarriages
- premature deliveries
- low birthweight babies (who are at greater risk of dying soon after birth or have health problems throughout life)
- babies with an increased risk of SIDS

These effects increase as the frequency of nicotine use goes up.<sup>7</sup>

### HEROIN, METHADONE, AND OTHER OPIATE-LIKE NARCOTICS

Opioid use during pregnancy has been linked to many adverse health effects in mothers and babies including:

- stillbirth or miscarriage
- preterm birth
- low birthweight
- breathing and feeding problems
- maternal overdose or death

Women who are using, give birth to addicted babies who must go through withdrawal. Opioid use disorder during pregnancy can cause **Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)**.

#### **Symptoms of withdrawal or NAS include:**

- tremors
- irritability, high-pitched long-term crying
- seizures and hyperactive reflexes
- sleep problems
- poor feeding or lack of appetite
- vomiting, diarrhea, and dehydration.
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

Long term issues in infants caused from exposure to opioids during pregnancy can include both physical and mental developmental delays.<sup>1</sup>

### COCAINE

Cocaine use during pregnancy is very harmful to a baby before and after birth. **Cocaine use can cause serious pregnancy problems such as:**

- miscarriage or placental abruption
- premature onset of labor
- premature birth or low birth weight
- prenatal stroke

**Cocaine use can also have lasting effects on a baby such as:**

- visual and coordination problems
- developmental retardation
- breathing disorders
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

Infants born to women using cocaine often experience painful withdrawal symptoms or neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) at birth.<sup>2</sup>

### MARIJUANA, CANNABIDIOL (CBD), OR TETRAHYDROCANNABINOIL (THC)

Using marijuana, CBD, or TCH during pregnancy can impact a baby's development. The chemicals found in marijuana and CBD oils are bad for a developing baby no matter the form: eating, drinking, smoking, oils, or creams.

**Pregnant women who use marijuana are at a higher risk of experiencing:**

- stillbirth
- miscarriage
- low birthweight babies
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- fetal abnormalities (especially of the nervous system)<sup>3</sup>

Babies born after exposure to marijuana may be born "high" and may need to spend time in a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) for withdrawal symptoms including tremors, long periods of crying, growth restrictions, trouble sleeping.<sup>5</sup>

### PERScription AND OVER-THE-COUNTER DRUGS

Since almost all drugs can pass from the mother to the developing baby, every pregnant woman should tell all her medical care providers that she is pregnant, and discuss the use of any drugs she is taking at her first prenatal visit.

**Drugs known to cause birth defects or other complications in the baby's development include:**

- birth control pills
- tranquilizers
- antibiotics
- Accutane (acne drug)
- Aspirin
- Ibuprofen
- excessive vitamins

Women should also restrain from "alternative" medicines such as herbs, dietary supplements, or CBD oils (even oils free of THC) as the risks and effects these products can have on a baby are not clear.<sup>6</sup>