

Risks of Using Cigarettes, Drugs or Alcohol While Providing Breastmilk

Our goal is to support you and your family's goal to give safe nutrition to your baby.

Drugs, both legal and illegal (street drugs), are used in our culture today. These drugs can hurt your baby, as what you eat, drink or inhale can pass to your baby through your breastmilk.

- **Street drugs** such as cocaine, PCP, amphetamines (speed), heroin and ecstasy can be passed to the baby while you are giving breastmilk. Street drugs should not be used. Drug use puts children at risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (**SIDS**), poor weight gain, delayed growth and delayed development. A drug test may be required for you or your baby if drug use is suspected.
- **Marijuana** should not be used when you are giving breastmilk to your baby. If this breastmilk is used, your baby could develop learning problems and may not be able to sit still or pay attention when they are older. This is called Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or **ADHD**. The active chemical in marijuana is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). This chemical collects in the breast tissue and can get into the breastmilk for weeks after using marijuana. A positive test for THC cannot occur from second-hand smoke.
- **Smoking** around your baby has been shown to increase the baby's risk for breathing problems, allergies and **SIDS**. If you cannot quit smoking, you may reduce the effects of smoke by not smoking around the baby. Smoke outside in an open space. Do not smoke in your car, even when your baby not is present. Your clothing should be free of smoke when you are around your baby. Any clothing the baby will wear should be washed and stored in a smoke-free location. Smoking can also cause a low milk supply.
- Your doctor may prescribe medications for you. These medicines may be safe to use when providing breastmilk. You should ask your baby's doctor and a lactation consultant about any medicine that has been ordered.
- Please tell your doctor about any drugs or alcohol that you are taking.
- Always make sure your doctor knows that you are breastfeeding.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) states that women who are providing breast milk for a sick baby should not drink alcohol. Alcohol does not increase the milk supply.

Your care team is here to answer any questions you may have.

References:

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