

Breastfeeding and Substance Use

Your needs and values are important to your decisions about breastfeeding.

1. Work with a pregnancy and substance use treatment team before you give birth. It is best if you stop all alcohol or non-prescribed drugs during pregnancy. This can help prepare you for breastfeeding.
2. Babies who were exposed to some drugs during pregnancy can have withdrawal symptoms after birth. These drugs include opioids and methadone. Breastfeeding and holding your baby skin-to-skin can decrease a baby's withdrawal symptoms. Breastfeeding helps babies with withdrawal go home sooner.
3. Withdrawal can cause feeding difficulties and weight loss in babies. Lactation support can help.
4. Non-prescribed drugs may be contaminated with other substances. These other substances may increase the risks to your baby.

Non-prescribed drugs and substances

- **Avoid breastfeeding if you use these:**
 - Opioids (like heroin or fentanyl)
 - Substances that cause drowsiness (like benzodiazepines)
 - Stimulants (like cocaine or methamphetamine)
- **Breastfeeding is recommended even if you use these:**
 - Tobacco cigarettes or nicotine vape products (Avoid using them around your baby. Try to quit or cut back.)
- **The harms of cannabis use are not well known**
 - It is safer to quit or cut back when breastfeeding.
- **Bedsharing while using substances or if you smoke is unsafe**
 - Plan to have your baby sleep on a separate surface within close reach.
- **Alcohol or other drug use**
 - May impair your safety and alertness around your baby. The amount of alcohol that gets into milk is small. Avoid significant alcohol use.

Treatments for Substance Use Disorder

- **Breastfeeding is safe with these treatments:**
 - Methadone, buprenorphine, naltrexone
 - Prescribed benzodiazepines
 - Nicotine replacement (such as gum or patch)
 - Bupropion
- **Talk to your doctor about breastfeeding with these treatments:**
 - Disulfiram
 - Varenicline

This information is a general guide to discuss with your health care professional. It may not apply to your family or situation.

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A co-sleeper (sidecar)
is an alternative to
bedsharing.



If using tobacco, alcohol, or other substances, plan to have your baby sleep near you in arms reach, rather than bedsharing.

Not all medications or substances get into breast milk. This depends on many factors such as the chemistry of the drug. The dose and timing can also affect how much gets into the milk. Premature, small, and young babies are more sensitive to the effects of substances and drugs. Your doctors can help you learn more about safety.