



Marijuana and Breastfeeding

Medical marijuana is legal in Maryland for adults over the age of 21; however, The American Academy of Pediatrics says that mothers who are breastfeeding should not use marijuana in any form. Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the chemical in marijuana that makes you feel “high,” is passed to your baby and can build up in his or her system.

- THC is stored in body fat and can remain there for weeks at a time.
- Both breastmilk and your baby’s brain tissue are heavy in fat.
- THC can pass from you to your baby and be present in your baby’s system even if you haven’t used marijuana recently.
- “Pumping and dumping” is not an effective way to get marijuana out of your system.

We’re still learning about the effects of marijuana on children, but some studies have shown that THC can have negative effects on your child’s learning skills and attention span, making it harder for your child to do well in school.

Using marijuana products can harm your baby, even when you aren’t breastfeeding. Marijuana smoke has many of the same chemicals as tobacco smoke, some of which can cause cancer. Do not allow anyone to smoke in your home or around your baby.

Some people think that using a vape pen or eating marijuana (like cookies or brownies) is safer than smoking marijuana, but this is not true. Even though these forms do not have harmful smoke, they still contain THC.

If you are using marijuana, some activities may not be safe and should be avoided:

- Caring for your baby — make sure there is another person who can safely care for your baby
- Sleeping with your baby — the baby should have a separate sleep area
- Driving a car

Tobacco and Breastfeeding

Quitting smoking and tobacco use is one of the most important ways you can protect the health of you and your baby. Your doctor can play an important role in helping you quit, including giving advice and support, as well as connecting you with other resources.

You can also call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) for free support.

Breastfeeding provides numerous health benefits to both the baby and the mother, so it is recommended even when the mother is using tobacco products or e-cigarettes. However, the harmful chemicals in these products like nicotine can still be transferred to a baby through breastmilk, and it's safest not to use these products. Smoking is also known to reduce milk supply in mothers.

Using tobacco products around your child increases the risk for:

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SID)
- Bronchitis, pneumonia, and other respiratory illnesses
- Ear infections
- Impaired lung functioning

E-cigarettes are battery-powered devices that deliver nicotine, flavorings, and other additives through inhaled aerosol. Little is known about the effects of e-cigarette use on your baby's health. It is safest to refrain from using these products while you are breastfeeding.

How to minimize exposure to tobacco products:

- Do not smoke near your baby
- Smoke outside
- Create smoke-free rules for your car and home
- Be sure to change your clothes and wash your hands after smoking and before handling your infant

Alcohol and Breastfeeding

Because alcohol passes through breastmilk, the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests avoiding alcohol completely while breastfeeding. Alcohol can be transferred to your child if you are drinking while breastfeeding and can pose a risk to his or her health.

Important facts to know:

- Expressing or pumping milk after drinking alcohol, and then discarding it ("pumping and dumping") does not reduce the amount of alcohol present in your milk.
- Breastmilk will contain alcohol as long as alcohol is present in your bloodstream.
- Consuming alcohol of any kind may decrease the amount of breastmilk your baby consumes.
- Alcohol can change the taste of your milk, which may be objectionable to some babies.
- Drinking beer does not increase your milk supply, as urban myth suggests.

Drinking Guidelines

If you do choose to consume an alcoholic beverage, it is best to do so directly after you nurse or pump, not before. Be sure to wait at least two hours after a single drink before nursing.

1 alcoholic drink = 12 ounces of beer

or

1 ounce of hard liquor

or

4-ounce glass of wine

If more than one drink is consumed, it is best to wait to breastfeed for four hours after your last drink. This will allow your body as much time as possible to rid itself of alcohol before your next feeding and less will reach your infant.

Caring for your child while intoxicated can pose a serious risk to his or her safety. If you drink to the point of intoxication, make sure that a sober adult is present to care for your child.