



PR aMS

Positive Recovery and Midwife Support

A service for women with complex needs.

Making recovery possible in pregnancy.

Supporting women, babies and families for a brighter future.

USING CANNABIS WHEN PREGNANT

Cannabis is the most widely used illegal drug in the UK. It occurs naturally - it is made from the cannabis plant. Its main active chemical is tetrahydrocannabinol (or THC for short) and it can make people feel chilled out, happy and content, but sometimes causes them to feel paranoid and can lead them to hallucinate. Cannabis has been linked to long-term and serious mental health problems, including psychotic illnesses, especially if there is a family history of mental health problems

See overleaf for information and advice on how to minimise the risk.

Contact:

Kim Walsh Specialist Midwife 07887 563708

Amanda Hill Recovery Navigator 07793246485

compassionate
care

Research has shown that cannabis has more toxins than tobacco, although it is typically smoked in smaller quantities than tobacco. In the past cannabis wasn't thought to be addictive. However, research has shown that it can be addictive, particularly if you have been using it regularly for quite a while. About 10% of regular cannabis users are thought to become dependent.

As with other addictive drugs such as cocaine and heroin, you can develop a tolerance to it. This means you have to have more and more to get the same effects. If you stop taking it, you can experience withdrawal symptoms, such as cravings, difficulty sleeping, mood swings, irritability and restlessness.

If you are pregnant, cannabis may harm your unborn baby. Research suggests that using cannabis during pregnancy could affect your baby's brain development. Regularly smoking cannabis with tobacco is associated with an increased risk of your baby being born small or premature.

Although it doesn't compare to fetal alcohol syndrome, cannabis exposure in the womb can cause any number of problems. Children whose mothers use marijuana during pregnancy have a higher risk of restricted growth and of developing ADHD, anxiety, and depression later in life.

Withdrawal symptoms at birth (neonatal withdrawal)

Withdrawal symptoms are thought to occur as the newborn baby's body has to adapt to no longer getting certain substances through the placenta. Neonatal withdrawal can be dangerous for the baby if left untreated. Studies have shown that babies exposed to cannabis while in the womb are at increased risk of withdrawal symptoms at birth. Symptoms include irritability and/or disturbed sleep/wake patterns.

If you have used cannabis in the weeks before delivery it is therefore important that your doctor and midwife are aware of this as your baby may require close monitoring and/or supportive treatment for a few days after birth.

If you are experiencing problems with cannabis and need any support to stop using, please contact the team using the telephone numbers listed overleaf.