

RECOVERYSTEPS  
CALDERDALE

Drug & Alcohol Services

NHS

Calderdale and Huddersfield  
NHS Foundation Trust



# 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.

## HEROIN USE IN PREGNANCY

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

Contact:

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**Amanda Hill** Recovery Navigator 07793246485

compassionate  
**care**

## Heroin use in pregnancy

Heroin can easily cross the placental barrier. This means that when a woman injects, inhales, or smokes heroin, the drug is passed along to the baby, presenting numerous risks and the strong possibility the baby will become dependent on the drug.

## Effects of Heroin on a Developing Foetus

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Taking drugs such as heroin can lead to a number of health issues related to pregnancy, including but not limited to;

- **Problems with the placenta:** The placenta is an important part of pregnancy since it provides a steady supply of blood through the umbilical cord—rich in oxygen and nutrients. When a woman has problems with her placenta, her baby may become oxygen- or nutrient-deprived. Placental abruption, or the separation of the placenta from the uterus, can be very serious for both the mother and the baby.
- **Increased risk of preterm birth:** “Preterm” is a term used to define babies who are born before 37 weeks of pregnancy are completed. There are categories of preterm birth, including extremely preterm (<28 weeks), very preterm (28 to <32 weeks), and moderate to late preterm (32 to 37 weeks) Low birth weight: Low birth weight is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as weight at birth less than 2,500 grams or 5.5 lbs. Low birth weight is associated with neonatal mortality, inhibited cognitive development, and chronic disease as the child grows up.

## Quitting Heroin While Pregnant

When a woman quits opiates while pregnant, her unborn goes through a period of withdrawal. The unborn is not able to tolerate the effects of withdrawal as well as the mother and this may result in the death of the baby. Because of this risk, it is important to talk to your doctor before attempting to quit using heroin on your own.

Pregnancy offers a window of opportunity to enter treatment and live drug-free. Often pregnant women use lower amounts of drugs, such as heroin, during the third trimester than they do the first and second trimesters.

It is important to talk to your health care provider about your options for treatment.

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