

## SPOUSAL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- Spousal abuse has been identified as a predictor of developing a substance abuse problem. Substance abuse and high-risk alcohol use are more prevalent among women who experience Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) compared to women who have not experienced IPV.
- In a study of more than 2,000 prenatal patients in North Carolina, victims of violence were significantly more likely to use multiple substances before and during pregnancy than women who had not experienced IPV.
- Pregnant women who are abused by their partners have a higher risk for tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drug use, depression and suicide attempts, all of which have negative effects on the developing fetus.<sup>1</sup>

## PAINKILLERS

Expectant mothers who abuse painkillers may develop anemia, pneumonia, diabetes or cardiac disease and may contract hepatitis. There are increased chances of miscarriage, low birth-weight, premature births, developmental delays, and behavioral or learning problems, or the baby could be born suffering from withdrawal symptoms.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Fact Sheet: Intimate Partner Violence and health People 2010 Fact Sheet." 3-8. 22 May 2007 <[www.endabuse.org](http://www.endabuse.org)>.

<sup>2</sup> "Fast Facts: Painkillers." Health and Community Services. Government of Newfoundland & Labrador. 22 May 2007 <[http://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/commhlth\\_old/factlist/FFPAIN.HTM](http://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/commhlth_old/factlist/FFPAIN.HTM)>.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A DRUG IS USED DURING PREGNANCY?

Increased chances of miscarriage, low birth-weight, premature births, developmental delays, and behavioral or learning problems, or the baby could be born suffering from withdrawal symptoms

### MARIJUANA

According to Dr. Richard S. Abram, author of *Will it Hurt the Baby*, "occasional use of marijuana during the first trimester is unlikely to cause birth defects." However, you should stop smoking once you are aware of pregnancy.

### COCAINE

Birth defects and other side effects are usually a result of prolonged use, but it is best to avoid cocaine altogether. Cocaine is a very addictive drug.

### HEROIN

Baby can be born dependant on Heroin. If you are addicted to heroin and pregnant, you should contact your health care provider so he or she can provide the best treatment for you and your baby.

### PCP/LSD

Because PCP/LSD users can be violent, there may be harm to the baby if the mother hurts herself.

### METHAMPHETAMINE

Methamphetamine can cause the heart rate of the mother and the baby to increase.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "Using Illegal Street Drugs During Pregnancy." May 2005. American Pregnancy Association. 22 May 2007 <<http://www.americanpregnancy.org/pregnancyhealth/illegaldrugs.html>>.

## METHADONE

Methadone is a long-acting medication used with counseling and other services to treat individuals addicted to short-acting drugs.

[MMT can prevent the withdrawal symptoms many drug users experience.](#)

Withdrawal for pregnant women is especially dangerous because it causes the uterus to contract and may cause miscarriage or premature birth. By blocking withdrawal symptoms, MMT can save your baby's life.

[MMT while pregnant will not cause birth defects for your baby](#), but some infants may go through withdrawal after birth. Withdrawal does not mean the baby is addicted. The dose of medication has no bearing on whether or not your baby experiences withdrawal. Infant withdrawal usually begins a few days after your baby is born but may begin two to four weeks after birth.

Many times a quiet, comfortable environment is enough to provide comfort to your baby. If the symptoms are severe, your baby's doctor may prescribe medicine to help. The doctor also may be able to provide information and support to you on how to make your baby more comfortable without medicine. [Once your baby is born, never give methadone or any other medication to your baby without your doctor's approval.](#) Even a small amount can be enough to harm or even kill your baby. Let your doctor manage the baby's withdrawal.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "Medical Treatment for Pregnant Women." Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. SAMHSA. 22 May 2007 <<http://csat.samhsa.gov/publications/PregnantWomen.aspx#how>>.

“Of all the substances of abuse (including cocaine, heroin, and marijuana), alcohol produces by far the most serious neurobehavioral effects in the fetus.”

—IOM Report to Congress, 1996

You *can* get help from counseling, support groups and treatment programs. Popular groups include the 12 step program.

Numbers that can help you locate a treatment center include:

- National Drug Help Hotline 1-800-662-4357
- National Alcohol and Drug Dependence Hopeline 1-800-622-2255

Arizona, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Utah, and Rhode Island's health care providers are required to report prenatal drug exposure. Reporting and testing can be evidence used in child welfare proceedings.<sup>5</sup>

## OTHER RESOURCES

[www.helpline-online.com](http://www.helpline-online.com)  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)  
[www.fascenter.samhsa.gov](http://www.fascenter.samhsa.gov)  
[www.americanpregnancy.org](http://www.americanpregnancy.org)  
[www.doveinc.info/](http://www.doveinc.info/)  
[www.na.org/index.htm](http://www.na.org/index.htm)  
[www.learn2hope.org](http://www.learn2hope.org)  
[www.endabuse.org](http://www.endabuse.org)

Massachusetts Substance Abuse  
Information and Education Hotline  
1-800-327-5050

Youth Hotline “Hurt”  
617-773-4878

Massachusetts Drug & Alcohol Hotline  
800-327-5050

Narcotics Anonymous  
818-773-9999

## DRUGS AND PREGNANCY



Quincy WIC Program  
At Quincy Medical Center  
114 Whitwell St.  
Quincy, MA. 02169  
617-376-5376

Nutrition for Women, Infants & Children  
*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
(DPH)

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<sup>5</sup> "Using Illegal Street Drugs During Pregnancy." May 2005. American Pregnancy Association. 22 May 2007  
<<http://www.americanpregnancy.org/pregnancyhealth/illegaldrugs.html>>.