



Talking with Your Clients PREGNANT OR BREASTFEEDING WOMEN

KEY TALKING POINTS AND RESOURCES TO HELP YOU IN CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR CLIENTS

Visit wechu.org/cannabis for more information and to download and print the key resources. The site also provides on-screen translation and read aloud feature in over 100 languages.

GENERAL TALKING POINTS

- Legal doesn't mean safe. Just like alcohol or tobacco, cannabis has effects on the brain and body.
- You should NEVER use cannabis if you have a history of mental illness or addiction, are under 25, or if pregnant or breastfeeding because you are more at risk of harm than others.

PRECONCEPTION WOMEN AND MEN

- Using cannabis may affect the ability to become pregnant.
- In heavy users, cannabis use has been linked to:

- changes in menstrual cycle for women, and
- lower sperm count and poorer sperm quality in men.

PREGNANT WOMEN

- Even though cannabis is a plant, it does not make it safe to use during pregnancy.
- There is no known safe amount of cannabis use in any form (smoked, vaped, eaten, etc.) when pregnant.
- Until we know more about the short and long-term effects of cannabis, the safest option for you and your baby is to NOT use cannabis while pregnant.
- Cannabis can be passed to a fetus while pregnant, which may be harmful to your baby.
- Cannabis use during pregnancy may result in your baby having a lower birth weight, which can lead to health problems as your child grows.

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- Using cannabis during pregnancy may also affect your baby's developing brain, lead to learning and behavioural problems, and mental health issues, which may affect your child throughout life.
- Cannabis use is not recommended to treat morning sickness, or for medical or therapeutic purposes during pregnancy. Talk to your health care provider about safer options.

BREASTFEEDING WOMEN

- There is no known safe amount of cannabis use in any form (smoked, vaped, eaten, etc.) when breastfeeding.
- Cannabis can be passed onto your baby through breast milk and be stored in your baby's fat cells, including the developing brain.
- Since the chemical THC in cannabis is stored in body fat, and can stay in the body for weeks, the 'pumping and dumping of breastmilk' will not eliminate the risk of exposure to cannabis.
- Until we know more about the short and long-term effects of cannabis, the safest option for you and your baby is to NOT use cannabis when breastfeeding.
- Cannabis can make you feel sleepy, confused, affect mood and the ability to make decisions. This may affect a mother's ability to breastfeed and care for your baby. Remember, the effects of cannabis can last for several hours.
- Breastfeeding is the healthiest choice for your baby. If you need help to stop cannabis use, local support is available (refer to last section: Getting Help with Substance Use)

Key Resource: *Thinking about using cannabis before or during pregnancy?* (Health Canada, 2018)

PARENTING

- Cannabis use may affect your ability to pay attention, make decisions, act quickly in an emergency, and respond to a child's needs (e.g., hunger cues, need of comfort). Remember, the effects of cannabis can last for several hours.
- Store all cannabis products in a locked and secure container, away from children.
- Like tobacco smoke, secondhand cannabis smoke is harmful, especially for babies and children.

Key Resource: *Thinking about using cannabis while parenting?* (Health Canada, 2018)

GETTING HELP WITH SUBSTANCE USE

Urgent help

- Windsor-Essex Crisis Line: 519-973-4435 (24 hour/7 days a week)
- If unintentional ingestion or bad reaction, call 911 or the Ontario Poison Centre: 1-800-268-9017

Find local treatment services

- Visit www.wechu.org/GetHelp: Directory of helplines and local treatment services for mental health and addictions. Can download and print a Treatment Options Brochure from this page
- Call Connex Ontario: 1-866-531-2600 www.connexontario.ca (24/7 support in 100+ languages)

References available on our website wechu.org