Royal United Hospitals Bath
NHS Foundation Trust

Cannabis use in pregnancy

Information for patients

This leaflet outlines the known risks of using cannabis in pregnancy for you and your unborn baby and offers information about how and where you can seek help to quit.

In the past, cannabis use during pregnancy was deemed relatively harmless and not much was known about the potential risks to the mother or the growing baby. However, most of the cannabis available in the UK today is much stronger and contains higher levels of potentially harmful substances. It is believed around 80% of 'street cannabis' available in the UK is made up of 'high THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol), low CBD (cannabidiol)' products. THC is the chemical that produces the pleasurable 'high' but also increases the risk of dependency and problematic side-effects such as paranoia and psychosis when consumed regularly.

Research into the effects of maternal cannabis use during pregnancy is widening and we already have sufficient evidence to suggest it may cause harm to unborn babies whilst they are developing, but also well into their childhood. The risks as we currently understand them include,

Risks to the baby:

THC crosses the placenta and will affect your unborn baby's development. High levels of carbon Monoxide (CO) produced during the combustion of cannabis also cross the placenta causing harm. This will increase the risk of,

- Learning, behavioural, mental health and substance abuse problems
- Being born with a low birth weight
- Admission to the Neonatal Unit (NNU) with health concerns
- Pre-term (early) birth
- Stillbirth, miscarriage or sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)

Risks for the mother:

Using cannabis can trigger the onset of mental health problems for the first time and can heighten any pre-existing mental health issues you may have. The younger you are when you start using cannabis, the greater the risk of mental health issues due to the effect of the THC on your developing brain.

What is recommended?

As health professionals we recommend that you stop using cannabis. If you need help with this, it is available from your local addiction services. Please see details of some of these services below. You can refer yourself or your midwife can help you contact them.

Tobacco dependency:

If you are also smoking tobacco, it is essential for the health of your unborn baby that you quit as soon as possible. We can support you with this; contact details for our services can be found below. You can refer yourself or ask your midwife to do this for you.

Our duty to you and your baby:

If you do not successfully quit using cannabis or you choose not to access support, we have a professional obligation to consider how this will affect your unborn baby and how it may impact on your ability to parent once your baby is born. If we are concerned, we may need to refer you to social services for ongoing support.

Getting Help with Cannabis Addiction

For information on the support available in your area or to make a self-referral visit Find a local service | Turning Point or call the numbers below

County	Contact Number
Somerset Drug and Alcohol Service	0300 303 8788
Bath and North East Somerset Drug & Alcohol Service	01225 342052
Connect **Wiltshire**	0300 5550 157

Getting help and support with Tobacco Dependency

County	Service name	Contact details
Wiltshire & BANES	Health in Pregnancy Team	ruh-tr.ttdteam@nhs.net 07785 951163
Somerset	Somerset Smokefree Families	Smokefree Somerset 01823 356222

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath, BA1 3NG

01225 428331 | www.ruh.nhs.uk

https://bswtogether.org.uk/maternity/

If you would like this leaflet in email form, large print, braille or another language, please contact the Patient Support and Complaints team on 01225 825656.

Date of publication: October 2025 | Ref: RUH MAT/041
© Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust