



(A joint project between the  
Rotary Club of Brisbane  
Mid-City and DRUG ARM)



Centre for Addiction Research & Education  
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# Cannabis & Pregnancy

## How does Cannabis affect maternal health?

Use prior to learning of and during pregnancy is associated with more medical complaints:

- Increased risk of 3% for each additional occasion of use prior to pregnancy.
- Increased risk of 6% for increments in use during pregnancy.

## How does Cannabis affect a child?

- Interference with the normal reproductive cycle by disrupting the normal hormonal cycles.
- Exposure of the foetus in the uterus to THC via the placenta.
- Exposure of the newborn to THC via the breastmilk.

## How does Cannabis affect reproduction?

(This information is based on animal studies)

- Reduces sexual activity possibly by reducing sexual drive.
- Disrupts sperm production and function.
- Disrupts ovulation (process of releasing the egg from the ovary).
- Interferes with the ability to successfully implant the embryo into the uterus by either acting directly on the uterus or disrupting the normal hormonal cycles.
- Interferes with the embryo's continued growth and development if implantation is initially allowed.

## How does Cannabis affect development in utero?

- Chronic use during pregnancy inhibits maternal food and water intake leading to foetal undernutrition and dehydration.
- Chronic use during pregnancy may directly affect foetal absorption and cause growth retardation leading to low birthweight in newborns.
- Chronic use during pregnancy inhibits milk production and release by disrupting the normal hormonal cycles.
- Chronic use during pregnancy disrupts normal maternal care at birth.

## How does Cannabis affect development after birth?

The use of cannabis during pregnancy may have subtle effects on the child's development after birth:

- 1 Up to three years of age, no significant neurobehavioural effects have been identified.
- 2 At four years of age, tests of verbal ability and memory can discriminate between children of regular cannabis users and other children.
- 3 These deficits are still seen in school-age children.

These subtle inabilities can potentially lead to problems in:

- 1 Attention to critical stimuli.
- 2 Ability to refrain from impulsive and intrusive behaviour.
- 3 Ability to retain and recall material.

These problems may manifest as reduced performance in the classroom.

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## References:

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Copeland, Jan; Gerber, Saul and Swift, Wendy, (2006) Evidence-based answers to cannabis questions: a review of the literature, Canberra, Australian National Council on Drugs

[http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au/article.asp?ContentID=aod\\_pregnancy](http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au/article.asp?ContentID=aod_pregnancy)

<http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bfinfo/drugs.html>

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