Understanding the Effects of Prenatal Exposure to Illegal Drugs.

- Marijuana is the most common illegal drug, used by 14% of pregnant women.
- Cocaine is used by 2-3% of pregnant women.
- Opiates (e.g., heroin, methadone) are used by .5%.
- Polydrug use is common. Alcohol is quite often used concurrently with other drugs of abuse, typically marijuana, cocaine and cigarettes.
- Heavy drug use in pregnancy is associated with many other risk factors including poverty, mental illness, illegal activities.

What are the Effects of Drug Use on the Infant and Child?

- Medical problems for pregnant women
- Increased fetal mortality
- Increased neonatal complications
- Premature delivery
- Lower birthweight
- Increased respiratory problems
- Neonatal Withdrawal Syndrome (from opiates)
- Increased incidence of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS): the rate of breathing problems and SIDS is higher among babies of substance-abusing women (8.87 per 1,000 births) than the general population (1.22 per 1,000 births).
- Increased risk of postnatal environmental problems (e.g., neglect)

Children born to substance-abusing mothers, or living with substance-abusing parents, need early identification and intervention.

What are illegal drugs?
Marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, opiates.
# Myths about Illegal Drug Exposure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Reality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long-term deficits</td>
<td>No serious developmental effects found when the environment is accounted for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocaine Withdrawal Syndrome</td>
<td>Opiates cause neonatal withdrawal, not cocaine. No “withdrawal” syndrome lasts for non-CNS depressant drugs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We know all about the effects of</td>
<td>We don’t know about the effects of most drugs and what we do know is fairly limited. Much of what you read and hear is speculation and rumor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maternal substance abuse in infants</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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## Where to Turn

**Diagnosis:**

Babies Can’t Wait  
In Atlanta (404) 657-2726 or toll free: 1-888-651-8224.

Marcus Institute Fetal Alcohol Center  
1920 Briarcliff Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329  
(404) 419-4256

## Resources
