

Facts about Drug Use in Pregnancy

What are illegal drugs?

Marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamines, opiates.

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.

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Myths about Illegal Drug Exposure

| Myth | Reality |
|--|---|
| Long-term deficits | No serious developmental effects found when the environment is accounted for. |
| Cocaine Withdrawal Syndrome lasts for one month | Opiates cause neonatal withdrawal, not cocaine. No "withdrawal" syndrome lasts for non-CNS depressant drugs. |
| We know all about the effects of maternal substance abuse in infants | 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. |

Where to Turn

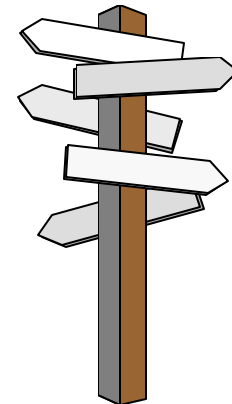
Diagnosis:

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



Coles, C.D. & Platzman, K.A. (1993). Behavioral development in children prenatally exposed to drugs and alcohol. International Journal of the Addictions, 28, 1393-1433.

Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development Project website: _____

<http://www.psychiatry.emory.edu/PROGRAMS/GADrug/>



Georgia Department of
Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities