

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

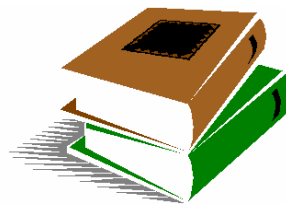
In Atlanta (404) 657-2726 or toll free: 1-888-651-8224.

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 @ www.emory.edu/MSACD