

Cannabis and Lactation



It's safest not to take cannabis while nursing your baby.

If you use the harm reduction suggestions in this document with light cannabis use, the benefits of chest/breastfeeding probably outweigh the negative effects of cannabis in your milk.

What is cannabis?

Cannabis (marijuana, weed, pot) is a plant that can be smoked and vaped, eaten, or applied to the skin. Cannabis comes in different forms, including flower, joints, THC concentrates, and edibles. Most of the effects of cannabis come from THC.

Can cannabis or THC enter breast/chest milk?

Yes. If you use cannabis, your milk will contain THC. The fat in milk and the brain attracts THC. Your milk will contain THC whether you smoke, take edibles, or use other methods.

What to do before, during, and after taking cannabis

Before taking cannabis:

- Plan for feeding your baby. Pump and store your milk, buy infant formula, or buy donor milk.

While taking cannabis:

- Don't smoke or vape cannabis in your baby's presence, where your baby lives, or in closed spaces like cars.

After taking cannabis:

- You can feed your baby infant formula, donor milk, or milk you pumped before taking cannabis.
- You can pump for comfort and discard your milk until your milk is free of THC.
- Pumping as often as you usually feed your baby is a good way to maintain your milk supply.
- Wait more than 1 hour after taking cannabis before feeding your baby. The longer you wait to nurse after taking cannabis, the safer it is for your baby.

Keeping you and your baby healthy and safe

- Take a multivitamin with iodine and eating brightly colored fruits and vegetables to increase the nutrition in your milk.
- Talk to your baby's health care provider if your baby is more sleepy than usual, has difficulty eating or is constipated.
- Get a babysitter for the time you are intoxicated.
- Don't drive while you're under the influence of cannabis.
- Avoid sleeping with your baby after taking cannabis. You are at a higher risk of accidentally suffocating your baby. The safest sleep arrangement is to share the same room with your baby in their own crib.
- You can reduce the negative effects of THC on your baby by reducing your cannabis use. Take cannabis less often, take THC products with lower concentrations (look for the % THC on the label) and take less at a time.
- Protect yourself and your baby from secondhand smoke by not smoking/vaping cannabis near your baby or in your home. Ask other people not to smoke/vape cannabis near your baby or in your home.
- Use edibles instead of smoking or vaping cannabis; you'll protect your baby from secondhand smoke.
- Store cannabis and substances securely. This is especially important if toddlers or other children are in the house.
 - **If you think your baby has swallowed cannabis**, call Poison Control at 800-222-1222.
 - **Call 911** if your baby has slow breathing, stops breathing, is difficult to wake, has skin or lips that look blue, is lethargic, too sleepy, or has vomiting and/or diarrhea that won't stop.



How cannabis may affect an infant

There isn't much research on the safety of cannabis during lactation. Cannabis exposure might lead to:

- Subtle, negative effects on physical and brain development.
- Toddlers that experience a reduced ability to regulate their emotions.
- Toddlers that experience sleep and attention problems.
- Increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Negative Impacts More Likely

Using larger amounts of cannabis
Using stronger (greater THC %) cannabis
Using cannabis more often
Using synthetic drugs like K2 or Spice

Negative Impacts Less Likely

Using smaller amounts of cannabis
Using less strong (lower THC %) cannabis
Using cannabis less often
Pumping and discarding around 1 hour after smoking cannabis

Safest

Not using cannabis

Reducing your cannabis use

Cannabis use can have a negative impact on your health. Inhaling smoke of any kind is bad for your lungs. Cannabis use can worsen certain mental health conditions like bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.

Talk to your health care provider or call the [Washington Recovery Help Line](#) at 866-789-1511 for support to reduce or stop cannabis use.

Do you use cannabis to manage symptoms of an illness? Talk with your health care provider about your symptoms and safer alternatives during lactation.

People use different terms to describe their body parts. Some transgender and non-binary birth parents use "chest" instead of "breasts." In this document, we use breastfeeding and chestfeeding as interchangeable terms. Lactation is a biological process where your body makes milk to feed babies.