

Pregnancy & Addiction: What You Should Know

The Extent of the Problem

Approximately **400,000 children** are exposed to tobacco in utero and **225,000** are exposed to illegal drugs every year.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) found that **15.9%** of pregnant women had smoked cigarettes, **8.5%** had used alcohol, and **5.9%** had used illegal drugs.



50%

Approximately half of pregnant women who smoke cigarettes quit smoking while they are pregnant.

About 40,000 cases of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD)

are seen each year from a much larger number of alcohol exposures.

40,000

Using Drugs to Self-Medicate

Among pregnant women entering a drug abuse treatment program, **73%** had been victims of physical abuse at some point, **71%** had suffered from emotional abuse, **45%** had been sexually abused and **36%** had experienced all three.

Source: Dualdiagnosis.org/look-pregnancy-wellness

Prenatal Drug Abuse Symptoms



Alcohol: Fetal death, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), birth defects (bone or heart problems), neurodevelopmental disorders



Stimulants: Placental abruption, miscarriage, stillbirth, heart defects, brain abnormalities



Tobacco: Increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), stunted growth, learning and behavioral issues, increased risk for addiction



Marijuana: Stillbirth, premature birth, low birth weight, withdrawal symptoms after birth, behavioral and developmental problems



Opioids: Placental abruption, stillbirth, increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome



Cocaine: Miscarriage, stillbirth, low birth weight, low head circumference

Source: Addictioncampuses.com/addiction-resources/pregnancy

Co-occurring or Dual Disorders

Many drug users have co-occurring mental health disorders, and treating these disorders is recommended during substance abuse treatment. Common co-occurring disorders include:

- Anxiety and/or depression
- History of childhood physical/sexual assault
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Source: Publichealth.gwu.edu/sites/default/files/downloads/JIWH/Pregnant_Women_and_Substance_Use_updated

What Can Be Done to Help?

- Inform pregnant women about the effects of drugs on the developing fetus.
- Help pregnant women cease substance abuse for their sake and their baby's.

Pregnant women are highly motivated to stop substance abuse; some can do it without treatment, while others require professional assistance. If you're pregnant and need help getting on the road to recovery, please reach out to a local drug rehabilitation center.



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