

# Substance Abuse & Pregnancy

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# What is Substance Abuse?

- It is the psychological and physical dependence on a substance such as, tobacco, alcohol, prescription medications and illicit drugs.
- When there is a substance abuse disorder during pregnancy, it can cause a serious risk for both mom and baby.

# Commonly Abused Substances

- Alcohol
  - Tobacco
  - Marijuana
  - Cocaine
  - Amphetamines & Methamphetamines
  - Opioids (heroin, methadone, morphine)
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How do these  
substances affect  
pregnancy?

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# Alcohol

- Miscarriage
  - Stillbirth
  - Separation of placenta from uterus (abruptio placentae)
  - Newborn death
  - Lifelong physical, behavioral, and intellectual disabilities
  - Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FSA)
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# Tobacco

- Preterm birth
  - Low birth weight
  - Placental abruption
  - Tissue damage to the fetus' lungs and brain
  - Birth defects (cleft lip/palate)
  - Increased risk for SIDS
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# Cocaine

- Increased BP
  - Spontaneous abortions
  - Placental abruption
  - Preterm labor
  - Difficulties during labor
  - Low birth weight
  - Fetal hypoxia, tachycardia
  - Meconium staining
  - Stillbirth
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# Amphetamines, Methamphetamines & Opioids:

- Placental abruption
  - Intrauterine growth restriction
  - Preterm labor
  - Spontaneous abortions
  - Low birth weight
  - Fetal or newborn death
  - High risk for SIDS
  - Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)
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Understanding the treatment barriers our expecting mothers may be facing.

Key communication points during a maternal interview about substance abuse.

- Let her know that these questions are asked to all pregnant females
  - Begin with questions about OTC or prescription medications and then begin asking about tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs.
  - Show an accepting and nonjudgmental attitude
  - Explain why it is important to know about any substance abuse
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# When substance abuse is acknowledged

The important key points in the history include the following:

- The type of substance being used
  - The amount of substance used
  - The frequency of use
  - The time of last dose/drink
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# Nursing Actions & Responsibilities

- Remember the main priority is to protect fetus and expectant mom from harmful effects of drugs and alcohol
- Maintain feelings of empathy
- Have a nonjudgmental behavior
- Understand that mother might have limited knowledge about the harms of substance use while pregnant

Tips: Private setting, using open-ended questions, observe mothers body language over the topic being discussed, and be an active listener.

# Patient Education

- To establish with a prenatal care provider.
- To start the prenatal vitamins regimen to reduce complications.
- Make healthy choices such as using substances less often while increasing healthy behaviors such as getting more sleep, keeping up with good nutrition, and drinking more water and safe exercise routine.
- Provided substance abuse treatment referrals as requested per patient.
- Build a support network during and after your pregnancy.
- Set goals and participate in realistic planning for lifestyle changes necessary to live without drugs and bring the pregnancy journey to those goals to help reduce risk behaviors and improve overall well being.

# Community Resources:

- **Lubbock Lighthouse**  
806-744-3419  
24 Briercroft Office Park, Lubbock, TX.
- **The Ranch at Dove Tree**  
866-572-6062  
1406 Quinlan St. Lubbock, TX.
- **StarCare Speciality Health**  
806-740-1421  
1950 Aspen Ave. Lubbock, TX.

# References

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