



Opioid Use Disorder and Pregnancy

Taking helpful steps for a healthy pregnancy

Introduction



If you have an opioid use disorder (OUD) and are pregnant, you can take helpful steps now to ensure you have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby. During pregnancy, OUD should be treated with medicines, counseling, and recovery support. Good prenatal care is also very important. Ongoing contact between the healthcare professionals treating your OUD and those supporting your pregnancy is very important.

The actions you take or don't take play a vital role during your pregnancy. Below are some important things to know, about OUD and pregnancy, as well as the Do's and Don'ts for making sure you have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby.

Things to know

- OUD is a treatable illness like diabetes or high blood pressure.
- You should not try to stop opioid use on your own. Suddenly stopping the use of opioids can lead to withdrawal for you and your baby. You may be more likely to start using drugs again and even experience overdoses.
- For pregnant women, OUD is best treated with the medicines called methadone or buprenorphine along with counseling and recovery support services. Both of these medicines stop and prevent withdrawal and reduce opioid cravings, allowing you to focus on your recovery and caring for your baby.
- Tobacco, alcohol, and benzodiazepines may harm your baby, so make sure your treatment includes steps to stop using these substances.
- Depression and anxiety are common in women with OUD, and new mothers may also experience depression and anxiety after giving birth. Your healthcare professionals should check for these conditions regularly and, if you have them, help you get treatment for them.
- Mothers with OUD are at risk for hepatitis and HIV. Your healthcare professionals should do regular lab tests to make sure you are not infected and, if you are infected, provide treatment.
- Babies exposed to opioids and other substances before birth may develop neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) after birth. NAS is a group of withdrawal signs. Babies need to be watched for NAS in the hospital and may need treatment for a little while to help them sleep and eat.

About OUD

People with OUD typically feel a **strong craving for opioids** and find it hard to cut back or stop using them. Over time, many people **build up a tolerance** to opioids and need larger amounts. They also spend more time looking for and using opioids and less time on everyday tasks and relationships. Those who suddenly reduce or stop opioid use may suffer **withdrawal symptoms** such as nausea or vomiting, muscle aches, diarrhea, fever, and trouble sleeping.

If you are concerned about your opioid use or have any of these symptoms, please check with your **healthcare professionals** about treatment or tapering or find a provider at this website:

www.samhsa.gov/find-help



Do

Do talk with your healthcare professionals about the right treatment plan for you.

Do begin good prenatal care and continue it throughout your pregnancy. These two websites give helpful information on planning for your pregnancy:

<http://bit.ly/ACOGprenatal> and <http://bit.ly/CDCprenatal>.

Do stop tobacco and alcohol use. Call your state's Tobacco Quit Line at 800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669).

Do talk to your healthcare professionals before starting or stopping any medicines.

Do get tested for hepatitis B and C and for HIV.

Do ask your healthcare professionals to talk to each other on a regular basis.

Don't

Don't hide your substance use or pregnancy from healthcare professionals.

Don't attempt to stop using opioids or other substances on your own.

Don't let fear or feeling embarrassed keep you from getting the care and help you need.

What to expect when you meet with healthcare professionals about OUD treatment and your pregnancy



The healthcare professionals who are treating your OUD and providing your prenatal care need a complete picture of your overall health. Together, they will make sure you are tested for hepatitis B and C and for HIV. They will ask you about any symptoms of depression or other feelings. You should be ready to answer questions about all substances you have used. They need this information to plan the best possible treatment for you and to help you prepare for your baby. These issues may be hard to talk about, but do the best you can to answer their questions completely and honestly. Expect them to treat you with respect and to answer any questions you may have.



Remember: Pregnancy is a time for you to feel **engaged** and **supported**. Work with your healthcare professionals to gain a better understanding of what you need for a healthy future for you and your baby.

Do you have questions for your healthcare professionals? If so, write them down and take them to your next visit.

Next Appointment Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____



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