

Dangers of Using Drugs During Your Pregnancy

Be open and honest about all drug use with your doctor. This includes alcohol and tobacco use. Any drug used when you are pregnant, even medicines prescribed by other doctors, can hurt your baby. They can cause your baby not to grow well before and after birth. Almost every drug can pass from you to your baby.

Using certain drugs while pregnant puts your baby at risk for becoming addicted to the drug as well. Once born, your baby is still dependant on the drugs and is no longer getting them. Your baby may start having the symptoms of withdrawal from the drugs. A baby suffering from withdrawal is irritable. It is very hard to comfort these babies.

Each baby may experience symptoms from withdrawal differently. The most common symptoms of withdrawal include:

- High pitched crying
- Blotchy skin
- Diarrhea
- Tremors and jitters
- Sleep problems
- Tense arms, legs and back
- Seizures
- Hyperactive reflexes
- Fever
- Sweating
- Rapid breathing
- Feeding difficulties due to sucking problems
- Vomiting
- Loose or watery stools

Your doctor may call this condition neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS). Babies diagnosed with NAS may seem normal at birth. The symptoms of withdrawal from the drug usually start in the first 24 to 48 hours of life. But sometimes the symptoms may not start until five to 10 days after birth. Babies with NAS stay in the hospital longer than other babies. Treatment for NAS is different based on the baby. This may include treatments like swaddling, a higher calorie formula and medications.

Possible Complications

Using drugs and alcohol during pregnancy can cause more than just symptoms of withdrawal. It can lead to health problems in your baby like:

- Birth defects, like mental retardation
- Learning disabilities
- Low birth weight
- Premature birth
- Small head circumference

- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)

Sources: National Library of Medicine,
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0004566/>

Tennessee Department of Health,
<http://health.state.tn.us/MCH/NAS/index.shtml>

About Kids Health,
<http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/ResourceCentres/PregnancyBabies/Pregnancy/ProblemswiththeBaby/Pages/Neonatal-Abstinence-Syndrome.aspx>

National Center for Learning Disabilities, <http://www.nclld.org/types-learning-disabilities/what-is-ld/what-are-learning-disabilities>