

The Harmful Effects of Drugs/Alcohol on a Fetus

Alcohol:

Mothers drinking alcohol when pregnant is the most common cause of health problems in newborns. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is characterized by retarded fetal growth and resulting in infants with below-normal weight and size is never made up. FAS includes facial abnormalities such as a small head, narrow eyes, flat nose and thin upper lip. Alcohol can also lead to defects of the heart, kidneys, muscles, joints and sex organs. It can cause mental retardation as well as learning disabilities, hyperactivity, poor coordination and sleep disturbances. There is NO safe level of alcohol use during pregnancy. It is recommended to stop drinking 3-6 months before conception to avoid potential problems

Methamphetamine/Cocaine

These drugs enter your baby's body through the umbilical cord and remain in the baby's body much longer than it does in yours. Miscarriage/Stillbirth risks increase as well as premature birth. Babies born to using mothers have withdrawal symptoms and suffer seizures. The baby could have strokes during labor and heart attacks after delivery. There is evidence that cocaine/meth exposed babies have a greater risk of dying of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), lifelong learning disabilities, and could have genetic defects of the genitals, kidneys and brain.

Heroin

Heroin is transmitted to the baby through the umbilical cord. Using heroin during pregnancy increases risk of premature birth, breathing difficulties, bleeding in the brain and infant death (SIDS). Babies born to heroin addicted mothers suffer from the heroin withdraw symptoms.

Hallucinogens (PCP/LSD)

Both PCP & LSD users can have violent behavior, which can cause harm to the baby if the mothers hurts herself. PCP use can lead to low birth weight, poor muscle control, brain damage and withdraw. LSD can cause genetic problems in the baby.

Marijuana/Cigarettes:

Smoking can keep your baby from getting the proper supply of nutrients and oxygen. This means your baby may grow slower and gain less weight in utero. Regular use is linked to chance of miscarriage, low birth weight behavioral/learning problems. Additionally, smoking by the mother during/after pregnancy has been linked in children to asthma, lung problems, ear infection, colds, behavioral problems and learning disabilities. If you are pregnant you should not smoke or even be around others while they are smoking.

Other

Also keep in mind that other things like caffeine, vitamins, and herbal teas and supplements can affect your unborn child. Ask your doctor before taking anything during pregnancy.