

Questions and answers about cannabis use during pregnancy

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A new study shows that women have many medical questions about the use of cannabis both before and during pregnancy, and during the postpartum period while breastfeeding. While more than half of licensed U.S. healthcare providers responded by saying that perinatal cannabis use was harmful, and nearly half discouraged perinatal cannabis use, many providers missed the opportunity to educate on safety or discourage cannabis use during pregnancy and breastfeeding. These findings are published in *Journal of Women's Health*.

The article entitled "Women's Questions about Perinatal Cannabis Use and Healthcare Providers' Responses" was coauthored by Kelly Young-Wolff, Ph.D., MPH, Kaiser Permanente Northern California (Oakland) and colleagues from Stanford University and HealthTap. HealthTap is an open online platform in which anyone, anywhere can ask a free question. HealthTap's [healthcare providers](#) are licensed in the U.S.

The researchers categorized the women's questions about cannabis use into themes that spanned the time period of preconception, prenatal, and postpartum. The most prevalent questions were those concerning detection of cannabis in [pregnant women](#) or at delivery, effects on the ability to conceive, potential harms of a mother's prenatal use to the fetus, and risks of baby exposure and [health effects](#) via breastmilk. The provider responses regarding the safety of perinatal cannabis were denoted as 55.6% harmful, 8.8% safe, 8.8% mixed/unsure, and 26.8% not addressed.

Susan G. Kornstein, MD, Editor-in-Chief of *Journal of Women's Health* and Executive Director of the Virginia Commonwealth University Institute for Women's Health, Richmond, VA, states: "While nearly half (49.6%) of the providers discouraged perinatal cannabis use, 49.9% neither encouraged nor discouraged its use. This represents a missed opportunity to counsel [women](#) on the potentially harmful effects of cannabis use during conception, fetal growth and development, and

breastfeeding."

More information: Kelly C. Young-Wolff et al, Women's Questions About Perinatal Cannabis Use and Health Care Providers' Responses, *Journal of Women's Health* (2020). [DOI: 10.1089/jwh.2019.8112](https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2019.8112)

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