

# Prenatal Education

## Key Messages for Ontario



## Medications and Drugs

### Key Messages

In these key messages, medications include prescription, over-the-counter, and herbal products. Drug use includes recreational or street drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, and others. For information about tobacco and alcohol, see the Smoking and Alcohol Key Messages.

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**Talk to your health care provider about medications you are taking, are about to take, or considering stopping during your pregnancy or while breastfeeding.**

Medications may reach your baby through the placenta or through your breastmilk. The potential harmful effects of medication on pregnant women or babies are not always known or studied.

It is important to discuss any medicines you are taking with your health care provider while you are planning your pregnancy or as soon as possible. Methadone treatment while pregnant or breastfeeding is safe for your baby.

Ask your health care provider the following questions about medication use during pregnancy:

- ▶ Is this medication safe to take during pregnancy?
- ▶ What are the benefits?
- ▶ What are the risks?
- ▶ Are there any alternatives?

If you need to take medication while breastfeeding, ask your health care provider if it is okay to breastfeed while taking this medication or if there are safer alternatives. Most medications are safe to take while breastfeeding.

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**Taking recreational or street drugs during your pregnancy or while breastfeeding is harmful to you and your baby.**

Discuss any recreational or street drug use with your health care provider before you are pregnant or as soon as possible. It is safest not to use drugs during pregnancy or while breastfeeding. If you are considering quitting drug use while pregnant speak to your health care provider about the safest way to quit.

Babies born to mothers who take drugs may:

- ▶ Be born too soon and be smaller than average.
- ▶ Have health problems.
- ▶ Go through drug withdrawal if their mother uses drugs prior to birth.
- ▶ Have problems learning.

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## Ask for help if you want to quit using recreational or street drugs.

It is never too late to reduce or stop using drugs. It can be very difficult to admit to drug use. Finding support from someone you can trust is key to getting help. Your partner, family members, or friends may be a great source of support. Speak with your health care provider about services to help you quit safely. Some people use drugs because of events in their lives such as abuse or trauma. Counselling or other services may help.

For help to stop using drugs:

- ▶ Call the Drug and Alcohol Helpline at 1-800-565-8603 for free, confidential information about alcohol and drug addiction services in Ontario.
- ▶ Call the Centre for Addiction and Mental health (CAMH) at 1-800-463-6273 for a self-referral for assessment and treatment around addiction/substance use.

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## Learn more about medications and drugs.

You can find out more about medication and drug use during pregnancy and breastfeeding from the following resources.

- ▶ Your health care provider
- ▶ Your local public health unit 1-866-532-3161
- ▶ Motherisk Helpline 1-877-439-2744 or 416-813-6780 (Toronto and GTA)  
[www.motherisk.org](http://www.motherisk.org)
- ▶ Telehealth Ontario 1-866-797-0000
- ▶ Your local pharmacist
- ▶ oMama  
[www.omama.com](http://www.omama.com)