

# Pregnancy and opioids

Are you pregnant or hope to be, and using opioids?  
Here's what you need to know.

## Using opioids while pregnant can affect the fetus as well as the mother

Just as there is more than one pathway into addiction there is more than one pathway out. Several treatment options are available but it's important to ask a health care or service provider to help you. Talk to family and friends you can trust, and talk to people who have been there.

## Managing withdrawal during pregnancy

Whether you are taking prescription opioids or using illicit opioids, if you stop taking them suddenly you will have withdrawal symptoms. The fetus will also have these symptoms. Withdrawal can be life-threatening for a fetus. There are ways to reduce your opioid use that are safe for you and your baby. Before making any changes, talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner about your options.

## It's risky to mix

Try to avoid smoking, drinking and using street drugs while you're pregnant. No amount of alcohol is safe to drink when pregnant. It's especially dangerous to mix opioids with other medications or alcohol. For more information on substances that you should not use while pregnant, call the Motherisk Helpline at 1 877 439-2744 or visit [www.motherisk.org](http://www.motherisk.org).

## You have options for health care

If you don't have a doctor or nurse practitioner, you can go to a walk-in clinic. If you don't want to see someone in person, you can call Telehealth Ontario for free, confidential health advice at 1 866 797-0000.

If you notice signs of withdrawal, or if you have cramping or bleeding, call 911 or go to an emergency room.



## After the baby is born

If you use prescription or illicit opioids while you are pregnant, there is a chance that your baby may go through opioid withdrawal after being born. This is called neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS). It can be very uncomfortable for the baby, but it can be treated. For example, babies can be treated with methadone for a short time.

## Getting help

If you're interested in addictions treatment, call ConnexOntario's Drug and Alcohol Helpline at 1 800 565-8603, or visit [www.drugandalcoholhelpline.ca](http://www.drugandalcoholhelpline.ca).

Remember, it is not a failure if you have a relapse. This is about harm reduction, and you can always begin again.

## Resources and links

Opioid Resource Hub: [www.porticonetwork.ca/web/opioid-resource-hub/home](http://www.porticonetwork.ca/web/opioid-resource-hub/home)

For more information on methadone maintenance treatment, visit [www.methadonesaveslives.ca](http://www.methadonesaveslives.ca) and see the *Methadone Maintenance Treatment Client Handbook* (revised), available at [www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health\\_information/a\\_z\\_mental\\_health\\_and\\_addiction\\_information/methadone/Documents/mmt\\_client\\_hndbk.pdf](http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health_information/a_z_mental_health_and_addiction_information/methadone/Documents/mmt_client_hndbk.pdf).