

HARM REDUCTION

Harm Reduction is a radical change from the way society has historically responded to substance use.

For decades we've been told that drugs are the problem - and that if we punished drug use we could eliminate the problems of addiction, abuse, disease, crime, and violence.

Unfortunately, most of the problems our society links with drug use are not caused by drugs. Rather, they are the result of the way we treat people who use them. These problems are only made worse by structural racism, marginalization, and criminalization.

Instead of seeking to engage in a War on Drugs - which we see as a War on People, **Harm Reduction focuses on improving the health and wellbeing of our community - whether or not people continue using substances.**

harmreduction.org

Harm Reduction is the idea that even if we can't completely eliminate every health or societal risk associated with substance use, there are things we can do to minimize, mitigate, and alleviate harm.

The most important and radical part of Harm Reduction is to demonstrate with our words and actions that we respect and love people who use drugs.

Abstaining from all recreational substance use during pregnancy, parenting, breastfeeding and chestfeeding is the safest option. But we understand that some people have trouble achieving abstinence - or simply don't want to.

Whether you're using substances or not, your health and pregnancy matter! There are steps that you can take to be safer, healthier, and happier.

perinatalharmreduction.org

Substance use is just one of many things that influence health and pregnancy outcomes. This section will give you the tools you need to be as healthy as possible, whether or not you stop using.

Most people try several times before they can stop using. **A good healthcare provider will continue to work with people who are unable or unwilling to stop using**, rather than dropping them as clients.

Periods of both abstinence and use are part of just about everyone's journey. Even if someone is committed to quitting their substance use, multiple relapses are normal and expected. **If a treatment does not work, try something else.** Remember: the treatment failed, not you.

The following sections will give you the **tools you need to help you take care of yourself and have a healthy pregnancy** - whether or not you are trying to cut back or stop your substance use.

NOTE: Much of the research that has been conducted on pregnant people who use drugs cannot definitively state if one behavior or drug causes a bad outcome. In many cases, studies about pregnancy and substance use cannot control for other variables (such as poverty, racism, other substance use, trauma, and poor nutrition) that might lead to negative outcomes.

TIPS FOR A HEALTHIER PREGNANCY

- TAKE YOUR VITAMINS

Prenatal vitamins provide you with the extra minerals and nutrients you need to protect your health and ensure your baby's healthy development.

- GET GOOD PRENATAL CARE

This is the most important thing you can do. Getting care early and often reduces your risks for most complications.

- ASSESS YOUR USE

Use fewer substances less often while increasing your healthy behaviors like getting more sleep, eating better, and drinking more water.



HARM REDUCTION

strategies for parents

Record how much you use. This can help you reduce your use, even if that was not your original goal.



Set limits on when and where you use, like waiting until after 5:00 to drink or only using at home or with a trusted friend.



Make a list of the risks and benefits of stopping and continuing to use. Think about where you're at or who you're with when you use.

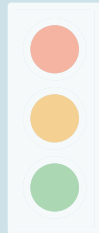


Avoid using opioids, alcohol, or other depressants (downers) when you are feeling alone or vulnerable.



Switch to a safer method of using your drug of choice. For example, edibles instead of vaping or smoking instead of injecting.

absorbing ingesting inhaling injecting



Set personal limits on what you use, how often, and how much. For example, don't combine substances. Plan to have no more than 3 drinks over 2 hours.



Make a safety plan before you use. For example, arrange transportation so you don't need to drive.



Make a parenting plan. Before any substance use - including alcohol use - arrange for help with childcare.



Attend support groups like Moderation Management, SMART Recovery, NA, or AA. Look for peer support.



Take good care of your body and mind. Eat healthy foods. Get enough sleep. Exercise. Drink water.



OPIOID OVERDOSE + PREGNANCY



When overdoses happen, giving naloxone (Narcan®) saves lives - including the lives of pregnant people and their babies

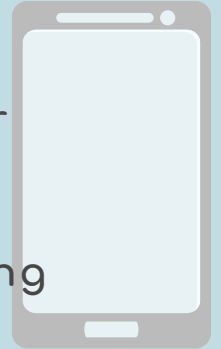
Place the person in the recovery position on their left side to improve blood flow to the placenta.



If you think they have injured their back or neck don't move them.

Call **911**

Tell the dispatcher that you are with a pregnant person who is not breathing and you need paramedics.



You do not need to tell them that this may be a drug poisoning or overdose. If you do they may send police officers.

Stay with the person or find someone who can until paramedics arrive.



Tell the responders that the person takes opioids and may have taken too much and overdosed.



Respond to overdose in a pregnant person exactly the same as you would for anyone else.



Academy of Perinatal
Harm Reduction

www.harmreduction.org

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**NATIONAL
HARM REDUCTION
COALITION**

TIPS FOR SAFER USE

Empower yourself and the people you care about. Learn what you can do to reduce the risk of the harms that are associated with substance use.



- Know where what you're using came from. Know your dealer.
- Don't use alone. Use with someone you trust.
- Use in a safe place.
- Take control of what you use and how you use it. Don't depend on someone else to help you inject. Decide for yourself how much you use and when.
- Start with a small amount. Go slow.

If you are snorting, please remember:

- Snort off a of clean surface.
- Use your own clean, new plastic straw or spoon. Don't share.
- Rinse your nostrils before and after snorting. If they get irritated use lip balm or vitamin E oil on them.



If you are smoking with a glass pipe, please remember:

- Use your own mouthpiece or pipe.
- Put filter screens in place with a wooden pusher.
- Use PYREX® (borosilicate) pipes and a reliable, controllable heat source.
- Drink water, use lip balm, and chew gum to keep your mouth and lips moist and to prevent cracks or blisters that can allow bacteria and viruses in.

If you are injecting, please remember:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20+ seconds.
- Clean the skin before every injection.
- Use clean, sterile water, a filter, and a disposable cooker.
- Use as little acid (vitamin C) as possible.
- Use a new syringe for each injection.
- Use your own equipment. Don't share.
- Put used syringes in a thick, plastic sharps container.



Rates of skin and soft tissue infections and blood borne bacteria are rising among people who inject drugs. These infections can settle on the heart valves (endocarditis). You can prevent these infections by using clean and sterile supplies and good hygiene.