



Opioid Use Disorder and Pregnancy

Taking helpful steps for a healthy pregnancy

Introduction



If you have an opioid use disorder (OUD) and are pregnant, you can take helpful steps now to ensure you have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby. During pregnancy, OUD should be treated with medicines, counseling, and recovery support. Good prenatal care is also very important. Ongoing contact between the healthcare professionals treating your OUD and those supporting your pregnancy is very important.

The actions you take or don't take play a vital role during your pregnancy. Below are some important things to know, about OUD and pregnancy, as well as the Do's and Don'ts for making sure you have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby.

Things to know

- OUD is a treatable illness like diabetes or high blood pressure.
- You should not try to stop opioid use on your own. Suddenly stopping the use of opioids can lead to withdrawal for you and your baby. You may be more likely to start using drugs again and even experience overdoses.
- For pregnant women, OUD is best treated with the medicines called methadone or buprenorphine along with counseling and recovery support services. Both of these medicines stop and prevent withdrawal and reduce opioid cravings, allowing you to focus on your recovery and caring for your baby.
- Tobacco, alcohol, and benzodiazepines may harm your baby, so make sure your treatment includes steps to stop using these substances.
- Depression and anxiety are common in women with OUD, and new mothers may also experience depression and anxiety after giving birth. Your healthcare professionals should check for these conditions regularly and, if you have them, help you get treatment for them.
- Mothers with OUD are at risk for hepatitis and HIV. Your healthcare professionals should do regular lab tests to make sure you are not infected and, if you are infected, provide treatment.
- Babies exposed to opioids and other substances before birth may develop neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) after birth. NAS is a group of withdrawal signs. Babies need to be watched for NAS in the hospital and may need treatment for a little while to help them sleep and eat.

About OUD

People with OUD typically feel a **strong craving for opioids** and find it hard to cut back or stop using them. Over time, many people **build up a tolerance** to opioids and need larger amounts. They also spend more time looking for and using opioids and less time on everyday tasks and relationships. Those who suddenly reduce or stop opioid use may suffer **withdrawal symptoms** such as nausea or vomiting, muscle aches, diarrhea, fever, and trouble sleeping.

If you are concerned about your opioid use or have any of these symptoms, please check with your **healthcare professionals** about treatment or tapering or find a provider at this website: www.samhsa.gov/find-help.



Do

Do talk with your healthcare professionals about the right treatment plan for you.

Do begin good prenatal care and continue it throughout your pregnancy. These two websites give helpful information on planning for your pregnancy:
<http://bit.ly/ACOGprenatal> and <http://bit.ly/CDCprenatal>.

Do stop tobacco and alcohol use. Call your state's Tobacco Quit Line at 800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669).

Do talk to your healthcare professionals before starting or stopping any medicines.

Do get tested for hepatitis B and C and for HIV.

Do ask your healthcare professionals to talk to each other on a regular basis.

Don't

Don't hide your substance use or pregnancy from healthcare professionals.

Don't attempt to stop using opioids or other substances on your own.

Don't let fear or feeling embarrassed keep you from getting the care and help you need.

What to expect when you meet with healthcare professionals about OUD treatment and your pregnancy



The healthcare professionals who are treating your OUD and providing your prenatal care need a complete picture of your overall health. Together, they will make sure you are tested for hepatitis B and C and for HIV. They will ask you about any symptoms of depression or other feelings. You should be ready to answer questions about all substances you have used. They need this information to plan the best possible treatment for you and to help you prepare for your baby. These issues may be hard to talk about, but do the best you can to answer their questions completely and honestly. Expect them to treat you with respect and to answer any questions you may have.



Remember: Pregnancy is a time for you to feel **engaged** and **supported**. Work with your healthcare professionals to gain a better understanding of what you need for a healthy future for you and your baby.

Do you have questions for your healthcare professionals? If so, write them down and take them to your next visit.

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Treating Opioid Use Disorder During Pregnancy

Getting the help and support you need from your healthcare professionals

Introduction



Opioid use disorder (OUD) is a treatable disease. When OUD is managed with medicines and counseling, you *can* have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby. However, during pregnancy, adjustments to your OUD treatment plan and medicines may be needed.

The actions you take or don't take play a vital role during your pregnancy. Below are some important things to know about OUD treatment during pregnancy, as well as the Do's and Don'ts for making sure you receive the best treatment possible.

Things to know

- Methadone and buprenorphine are the safest medicines to manage OUD during your pregnancy. Both of these medicines stop and prevent withdrawal and reduce opioid cravings, allowing you to focus on your recovery and caring for your baby.
- If you have used opioids, methadone and buprenorphine medicines can help you stop.
- Many pregnant women with OUD worry about neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS), a group of withdrawal signs that may occur in babies exposed to opioids and other substances before birth. NAS *can* be diagnosed and treated.
- You may need medicine other than those for OUD to treat pain during or after delivery. Other options, such as an epidural and/or a short-acting opioid, can be used to keep you comfortable.
- All hospitals must report to state child welfare agencies when a mother who is using substances gives birth. This report is used to make sure that a safe care plan is in place to deal with both your and your baby's well-being. It is not used to remove your baby from your care. Participating in OUD treatment before and after the birth of your baby shows your commitment to providing a safe, nurturing environment for your baby.

Treatment vs. Withdrawal

Some pregnant women with OUD consider completely withdrawing from using opioids, but seeking treatment is always the most helpful course of action. Withdrawal may make you more likely to start using drugs again and even experience overdoses.



If you are not currently in treatment, talk with your healthcare professionals about treatment medicines and behavioral counseling. If you need to find a provider, visit this website: www.samhsa.gov/find-help.

Do

Do ask about the risks and benefits of taking one of the medicines for OUD during pregnancy.

Do talk to your healthcare professionals about your OUD treatment medicine dose if you are experiencing cravings or withdrawal symptoms.

Do ask your healthcare professionals about counseling and recovery support services.

Do make sure your treatment plan includes steps to treat other medical or behavioral health problems such as depression or anxiety.

Do request that your medical chart includes several ways to address your pain during and right after delivery.

Do ask your healthcare professionals to help you make and keep follow-up visits and to talk to each other on a regular basis.

Don't

Don't consider changing your OUD medicine unless you are taking naltrexone, which has not been studied in pregnancy. Changing your OUD medicine may increase your risk of returning to substance use.

Don't use alcohol or any medicines that might make you sleepy, especially benzodiazepines, when taking OUD medicines.

Don't let your OUD go untreated because you want to prevent your baby from experiencing NAS. Treatment medicines can be used safely during pregnancy and dosing changes will not change the risk or severity of NAS for your baby.

What to expect when you meet with healthcare professionals about OUD treatment and your pregnancy



Creating a treatment plan requires your healthcare professionals to talk to you about the risks and benefits of different medicines and then together select the one that's best for you. You and your healthcare professionals will also discuss other medical conditions or behavioral health problems that could affect your treatment. Your healthcare professionals will help you decide how best to involve your family and friends in your recovery. They can also suggest support groups to join and other services that can help you throughout your recovery.



Remember: The **benefits** of taking methadone or buprenorphine during pregnancy far outweigh the risks of not treating your OUD. You and your healthcare professionals can **work together** to adjust your treatment plan to achieve success.

Do you have questions for your healthcare professionals? If so, write them down and take them to your next visit.

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Treating Babies Who Were Exposed to Opioids Before Birth

Support for a new beginning

Introduction



Many pregnant women with an opioid use disorder (OUD) worry about harmful effects of opioids to the fetus. Neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) is a group of withdrawal signs that may occur in a newborn who has been exposed to opioids and other substances. NAS signs may include high-pitched and excessive crying, seizures, feeding difficulties, and poor sleeping. **NAS is a treatable condition.**

The actions you take or don't take play a vital role in your baby's well-being. Below are some important things to know about what to expect if your baby needs special care after birth, as well as the Do's and Don'ts for understanding and responding to your baby's needs.

Things to know

- A baby born to a mother who used opioids or took OUD medicine during pregnancy is typically observed in the hospital by a medical provider for 4–7 days for any physical signs of NAS. A care plan is created for your baby right away if signs of NAS are noted.
- Some babies with NAS may need medicines such as liquid oral morphine or liquid oral methadone in addition to non-medicine care supports.
- Other parts of treatment in hospitals include rooming-in and putting the baby's crib near your bed. You can also give this type of care to your baby through skin-to-skin contact, gentle handling, swaddling, using pacifiers, breastfeeding, and spending quiet time together.
- Your baby will be able to leave the hospital when he/she is successfully feeding and has been monitored for at least 24 hours after no longer needing medicine (if it is used). Some hospitals may also provide medicine for your baby in an outpatient clinic after he/she has been discharged from the hospital.
- Breastfeeding has many benefits for your baby. Breastfeeding can decrease signs of NAS and reduce your baby's need for medicine and hospitalization. Sometimes, breastfeeding is not recommended, so talk with your healthcare professionals to find out what's right for you and your baby.

Medicine Dose and NAS

If you are taking medicine for your OUD, reducing your dose will NOT help your unborn baby, but it might put your baby at risk. Changing or reducing your OUD medicine while pregnant is not a good idea because it can increase your risk for a return to substance use and might increase the chances of having your baby too early or having a miscarriage. The goal for your OUD medicine dose is to minimize withdrawal and to reduce the chances of going back to substance use.



Do

Do gain the skills and knowledge to understand and respond to your baby's needs. Your baby may need extra contact and cuddling to reduce NAS signs.

Do continue breastfeeding as long as possible when recommended.

Do ask for support so you feel prepared and comfortable with breastfeeding.

Don't

Don't change your medicine or dose of medicine without talking to your healthcare professionals.

Don't be afraid to mention any cravings or urges to use opioids to your healthcare professionals and seek the help you need.

What to expect when you meet with healthcare professionals about OUD treatment after birth



Before you leave the hospital, your healthcare professionals should describe the signs of NAS and provide you with contact information of someone who can help you if you have concerns. They will make sure that you know how to soothe your baby (for example, dimming lights, softly playing white noise, skin-to-skin contact, using a pacifier, and swaddling). They will also explain that the safest sleeping and napping position for a baby is on the back and will show you how to place your baby in the [Safe to Sleep](http://bit.ly/NIHSafeSleep) position (<http://bit.ly/NIHSafeSleep>). This position, and having babies sleep in their own space with nothing in the sleep area, reduces the risk of sudden infant death syndrome. You should also expect to have follow-up plans that include home visits and early pediatric follow-up visits (within 5 days of leaving the hospital).



Remember: Before leaving the hospital, make sure you **receive information** on caring for your baby if there are special needs as well as names and contact information of others who can give you additional support.

Do you have questions for your healthcare professionals? If so, write them down and take them to your next visit.

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Good Care for You and Your Baby While Receiving Opioid Use Disorder Treatment

Steps for healthy growth and development

Introduction



If you have an opioid use disorder (OUD), receiving the right medicine along with counseling and recovery support services is important at all stages in your life. From pregnancy to delivery to caring for your baby, addressing your OUD and taking care of yourself is a continuous process. You will be better able to protect and care for your baby with a focus on creating and updating your treatment plan and getting the support you need. In all situations, your commitment to treatment and recovery will go a long way.

After your pregnancy, the actions you take or don't take matter. Below are some important things to know about OUD and caring for your baby, as well as the Do's and Don'ts for creating a healthy environment for your family.

Things to know

- Birth control is important to prevent pregnancies you do not want as well as to ensure proper space between pregnancies. Talk to your healthcare professionals about the full range of birth control options, including long-acting reversible contraception and the best birth control options while you are breastfeeding.
- Breastfeeding is healthy for you and your baby, so you should continue breastfeeding as long as possible. The amount of OUD medicine that passes into breast milk is extremely small. Talk with your healthcare professionals to find out what's best for you and your baby.
- You may need additional treatment and support to help with your recovery. It is important to seek help early!
 1. To find a treatment provider in your area, visit this website: www.samhsa.gov/find-help.
 2. Join a support group: LifeRing (<https://lifering.org>); Mothers on Methadone (www.methadonesupport.org/Pregnancy.html); Narcotics Anonymous (www.na.org/); Secular Organizations for Sobriety (SOS; www.sossobriety.org/); SMART Recovery (www.smartrecovery.org/); Young People in Recovery (www.youngpeopleinrecovery.org/).

Medicine Dose

Now is a good time to ask your OUD treatment professionals to check your medicine dose. An effective dose during pregnancy may be too high or too low once your baby is born. It is normal to feel tired and stressed, but if these feelings are causing you to have cravings or urges to use opioids again, tell your healthcare professionals.





- Do schedule** a follow-up visit with your healthcare professionals as soon as possible after you leave the hospital.
- Do talk** to your healthcare professionals before starting or stopping any medicines.
- Do talk** to your healthcare professionals about birth control and family planning.
- Do continue** breastfeeding for as long as possible and ask for support if you need it.



- Don't change** the type of OUD medicine right after delivery.
- Don't hesitate** to ask for help when you are feeling stressed or depressed.
- Don't be afraid** to tell your healthcare professionals that you are having cravings or urges for opioids.

What to expect when you meet with healthcare professionals about OUD treatment while caring for your baby



If your medicine is no longer working and you feel sleepy or are tempted to start using again, your healthcare professionals can help. Be honest about any cravings or urges you may have to use opioids. The stress that comes with being a new mother may increase these urges.

Your healthcare professionals can offer counseling and other support services. But before they do, they need to know if you have other medical and mental health problems. They will test you for these conditions before you leave the hospital and at your follow-up visits to make sure you get the treatment you need. They will continue to recommend support services that allow you and your baby to receive the high-quality health care that you need.

Your healthcare professionals will work with you to create a birth control plan. Together, you will discuss if you want to have another child, how many children you would like to have, and how you would like to space out the births of your children. At this time, they will check in on how you are doing with breastfeeding and make sure you have the support you need.



Remember: The longer you follow your OUD treatment plan, the better your chances are of **staying in recovery** and strong for your baby. **Counseling** and **support services** are important to keep you and your baby safe and healthy at home.

Do you have questions for your healthcare professionals? If so, write them down and take them to your next visit.

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