

Legal Cannabis Doesn't Mean It's Safe for Pregnant Women. Why Risk It?

Ottawa – October 17, 2018 - The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) is concerned that today's legalization of cannabis may overshadow a growing body of medical research which suggests that the use of cannabis during pregnancy may be associated with the risk of low birth weight, preterm labour, stillbirth and may also negatively impact the developing baby's brain.

"Simply put, there is already strong evidence showing that cannabis is not good for the developing teen brain. Why would we think this wouldn't be the case for the fetal brain?" says Dr. Blake, CEO SOGC. "Current research indicates that cannabis has the potential to cause lifelong harm to a developing fetus in terms of memory function, hyperactive behaviour and an increased risk of anxiety or depression. Why risk it?"

The number of Canadian women of reproductive age who report smoking cannabis is increasing. A 2015 [Canadian Tobacco Alcohol and Drugs Survey](#) reported that 20.6% of women ages 15-19, 29.7% of women ages 20-24, and almost 10% of women ages 25-plus were cannabis consumers. This reflects an overall jump in female consumption from 7% in 2013 to 10% in 2015. There is concern that these numbers will jump further. When cannabis was first legalized in Colorado in 2014, there was a 23% spike in emergency hospital visits for cannabis-related illnesses in teens ages 13-20.

"Cannabis research has been difficult over the years because the drug has been illegal, and pregnant and breastfeeding women cannot be used in testing. So much of the data that has been reported is based on self-reporting by women who may have been reluctant to disclose accurate usage information," says Dr. Blake. "If we look at where we were forty years ago when data started to emerge about the risks of alcohol and tobacco in pregnancy, we see definite parallels. We know that the more a woman consumes, the greater risk to her baby, but we don't know how much is absolutely safe and how much is absolutely harmful - and we may never know."

"Our recommendation is to avoid cannabis during pregnancy and seek other alternatives to reduce nausea. And for women who use cannabis for medical reasons, we advise them to talk to their health care provider."

For more information on cannabis use during pregnancy and breastfeeding, please visit <https://www.pregnancyinfo.ca/learn-more/>.

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About The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada

The SOGC is one of Canada's oldest national specialty organizations. Established in 1944, the Society's mission is to promote excellence in the practice of obstetrics and gynaecology and to advance the health of women through leadership, advocacy, collaboration and education. The SOGC represents obstetricians/gynaecologists, family physicians, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals working in the field of sexual reproductive health. For more information, please visit www.sogc.org