

## BACKGROUND

With more states legalizing recreational marijuana and even more states legalizing it for medical usage, Marijuana has become one of the most widely used substances among pregnant woman in the U.S with Nevada ranking number two in the nation. Breast-feeding is the optimal feeding method recommended by several organizations

## PURPOSE

To increase community awareness on marijuana use and breastfeeding.

## METHODS

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC crosses the placenta, is highly lipophilic, and can be detected in breastmilk. National guidelines recommend abstinence from marijuana use during pregnancy and lactation.

Studies have revealed that THC does transfer into human milk. When a mother who only consumes marijuana occasionally, benefits of breastfeeding must be weighed against risks of smoking .



Legalization of marijuana has been associated with increased use in women of childbearing age. The proportion of young adults who reported marijuana use reached 43% in 2021, a significant increase from 34% in 2016. Since THC passes through breast milk, many Neonatal Intensive Care Units restrict the use of breast milk from THC positive women because the effects on early preterm infants are unknown.



Breast milk is one of the best ways to improve the outcomes of premature babies and lead to fewer infections, intestinal issues, improved brain growth and better overall development compared to those fed by formula.

## RESULTS

- Studies using laboratory animals show that in utero exogenous cannabinoid exposure may disrupt normal brain development and function.
- Prenatal marijuana exposure is associated with decreased attention span and behavioral problems.
- THC is secreted in breast milk and can accumulate to high concentration taking up to six 6 weeks to clear breastmilk.
- Studies reviewed by Gunn et al (2016) reported that in utero exposure to cannabis was associated with a decrease in birth weight.
- Academy of Pediatrics recommend exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months after birth.

## CONCLUSIONS

Because the potential risks of infant exposure during breast feeding, women should be informed of the potential risk exposure during lactation and encouraged to abstain from use. Donor breast milk is an alternative for those patients in the Neonatal ICU. Donor breast milk can serve as an alternative to provide Premature infants the benefits of breast milk while preventing the potential risks for marijuana exposure.

## REFERENCES

Reference available upon request

