

Guidelines for Breastfeeding and Maternal Drug Use

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Maternal Functioning Indicating that Lactation Should be Supported:

- Routine prenatal care
- No medical/psychiatric contraindications
- Routine NICU visitation and maternal involvement with healthcare team
- Access to lactation support
- Woman in substance abuse treatment
- Gives consent for discussion with counselor
- Counselor agrees with plan for breastfeeding
- Drug abstinent for 90 days prior to delivery with negative toxicology screen at delivery

Maternal Functioning Indicating That Lactation Should Not be Supported:

- Regular users
- Poor prenatal care
- NICU visitation unreliable and lack of maternal involvement
- Chronic THC use (smokes THC daily)
- No SA treatment or unwilling to provide consent for discussion with counselor
- No plans for postpartum SA treatment
- Relapse to drug use after establishment of lactation

Detailed Interdisciplinary Evaluation Required:

- Late prenatal care
- Routine NICU visitation and maternal involvement with healthcare team
- Women in SA treatment but relapsing within the 90 to 30 day period prior to delivery
- Concomitant use of other prescription medications
- Positive urine toxicology screen at delivery
- Recreational THC use**
- Strong family support

****Mothers using THC should be counseled regarding side effects which include:**

- Effects of THC in the newborn period will be additive to effects secondary to exposure during fetal life
- THC is secreted into breast milk in moderate amounts, accumulates in breast milk in high concentrations, and has a long half-life (67 days)
- THC is often combined with tobacco in a joint and the side effects of tobacco must be considered
- Babies exposed to THC in breastmilk exhibit sedation, growth delay, and decreased tone
- Passive tobacco exposure regardless of the source is associated with an increased risk of SIDS
- Children of mothers who smoke (tobacco and/or marijuana) have a higher risk of lower respiratory tract infections
- Maternal judgment and ability to respond is impaired
- Studies in newborn animals demonstrated an alteration of DNA and RNA synthesis, and proteins necessary for proper brain growth and development. Human studies show effects on neurodevelopment (decrease in infant motor development and psychomotor score)