

Substance Abuse Trends Alert!

February 2020

Marijuana Use among Pregnant Women Rises Steeply in Florida

Marijuana in the US and Florida Overall

After alcohol, marijuana is the most used psychotropic drug in the US.¹ It remains a Schedule I drug, defined by no accepted medical use and high potential for abuse.² In spite of federal regulations, a majority of states have legalized marijuana for recreational and/or medicinal use^{3,4}, and legalization may result in decreased perception of risk. Indeed, current use of marijuana among both youth and adults is steadily increasing, as reported in [Patterns and Trends of Substance Use Within and Across the Regions of Florida, November 2019](#). Though marijuana use is more prevalent among men, use among women is also increasing.^{5,6}

Marijuana Use during Pregnancy in the US

Increases among pregnant women, specifically, are also occurring, likely due, at least in part, to perceptions of safety and effectiveness for treatment of nausea associated with pregnancy. The prevalence of current use has exceeded 5% nationally in recent years, and this is likely an underestimate due to under-reporting (Figure 1).

Marijuana Use during Pregnancy in Florida

In Florida, the rise in marijuana use is markedly outpacing the national average. Following a period of little change with rates fluctuating up and down between 2.1% and 5.2%, the percentage of pregnant women reporting use in the past 30 days has increased sharply to nearly 15% (Figure 1).

Known Neonatal Effects of Marijuana

Though research among pregnant women and marijuana-exposed neonates is limited, there is evidence to suggest that marijuana use may increase the risk of stillbirth and is associated with neurodevelopmental deficits in the infant.⁸

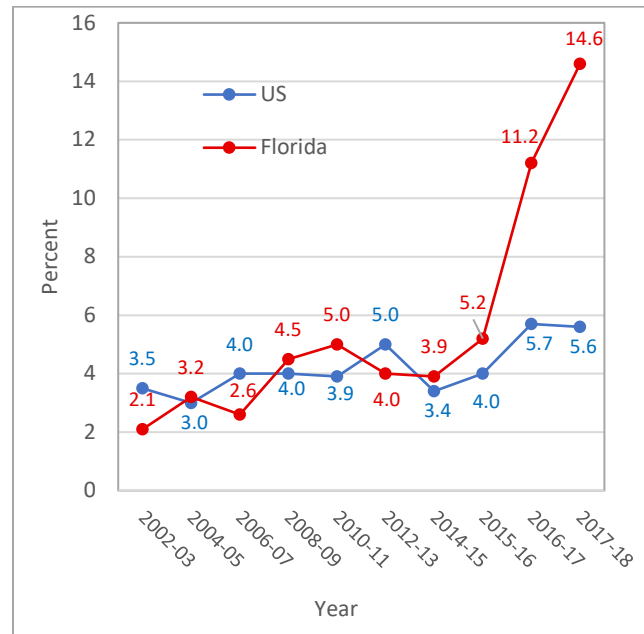


Figure 1. Self-reported marijuana use among pregnant women, US and Florida, 2002-03 – 2017-18. Source: [NSDUH](#)⁷.

Recommendations

Evidence-based programs to prevent initiation of marijuana use should target women of childbearing age⁹. Given the unknown safety of marijuana use during pregnancy, women who intend to become, or are already, pregnant should discontinue all marijuana use.¹⁰ In addition, THC passes from mother to baby through breastmilk; thus, cessation should continue post-partum.¹¹ In spite of the widespread perception that marijuana is not addictive, healthcare providers should assess women of childbearing age and mothers for marijuana use disorder and refer to or offer treatment, if indicated.^{10,11}

For more information, please visit the following:

Additional Information Sources

[American Academy of Pediatrics. Marijuana Use during Pregnancy and Breastfeeding: Implications for Neonatal and Childhood Outcomes](#)

[American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Marijuana and Pregnancy \(Infographic\)](#)

[American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Marijuana and Pregnancy \(FAQs\)](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. What You Need to Know About Marijuana Use and Pregnancy](#)

[Drug Free America Foundation. Prenatal Marijuana Exposure: Implications for Florida](#)

[National Institute on Drug Abuse. Can Marijuana Use During and After Pregnancy Harm the Baby?](#)

[National Institute on Drug Abuse. Is Marijuana Safe to Use While Pregnant or Breastfeeding?](#)

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Preventing the Use of Marijuana: Focus on Women and Pregnancy.](#)

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Learn About Marijuana Risks: Marijuana and Pregnancy.](#)

References

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9. Preventing the Use of Marijuana: Focus on Women and Pregnancy. SAMHSA Publication No. PEP19-PL-Guide-2 Rockville, MD: National Mental Health and Substance Use Policy Laboratory. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019.
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