

If you're pregnant and you smoke, drink alcohol, use cannabis, use drugs, and/or take certain prescribed medications like methadone or buprenorphine, your baby can also be exposed to these substances.

Babies who are exposed to these substances before birth may need extra support and care. Exposure can have short- or long-term effects on a child's physical, developmental, mental, or behavioral health.

If you're pregnant and using, there are things you can do to prepare to have a healthy pregnancy and baby:

- Take care of yourself by resting, eating healthy food, and talking with your healthcare professional about any current or previous substance use.
- Follow your healthcare professional's instructions.
- Connect with a certified peer recovery specialist for support.
- Ask about local resources and services for families and babies.
- Know what to expect when you go to the hospital to have your baby.

Keep reading to learn more.

Peer Support Services

If you're pregnant or parenting and currently using substances or are in recovery, a certified peer recovery specialist can help.

Certified peer recovery specialists are people who are in recovery and are trained to help others through safe, personalized recovery-focused support. They know what you're going through and are here to help. No cost, no judgment.

Prenatal and postnatal peer services offer support from certified peer recovery specialists who have lived experience with pregnancy/parenting and substance use.
401-895-6592

Prevent Overdose RI provides information on statewide treatment, recovery, and harm reduction resources.
preventoverdoseri.org/get-help

Family Visiting services will come to your home or an agreed-upon location to provide support and services for pregnant people, children, and families.
401-222-5960
health.ri.gov/familyvisiting

Rhode Island Buprenorphine Hotline connects people with 24/7 immediate telehealth services to start buprenorphine treatment.
401-606-5456



Pregnancy
can be an
exciting
time.

It can also be
challenging if
you smoke,
drink, use
drugs, or take
medication.

PREVENT
OVERDOSE RI 

Babies may need special care if they are exposed to certain substances including stimulants like cocaine and methamphetamines, or opioids like oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, heroin, and fentanyl.

Babies who are exposed to opioids and opioid treatment medications like methadone or buprenorphine (Subutex or Suboxone) may experience neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) after they are born. Not all medications should be stopped while you're pregnant, so it's important to let your healthcare professional know what you're taking.

If this describes your situation, you are not alone. Rhode Island has supports and services to help you and your baby be safe and healthy.



Pregnancy

GET INFORMATION

- Ask to speak to a healthcare professional who works with pregnant people and families affected by substance use.
- Ask for a prenatal consultation, and tour of the labor and delivery unit and newborn nursery at the hospital where you plan to deliver your baby.

GET SUPPORT

- If there are concerns about the baby's safety because the birthing parent or someone else in the house is using substances, the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) may be called. DCYF wants to make sure babies return to a home that is free from substance use and has a safe place for babies to sleep.
- Some certified peer recovery specialists have personal experience with DCYF. They can advocate for you and help you understand what to expect.
- Not everyone who gives birth to a substance-exposed baby will be asked to meet with DCYF, but it is good to be prepared. A hospital social worker, Family Visitor, or certified peer recovery specialist can provide support and help you understand what to expect.

Plan for Delivery

- Talk with your prenatal healthcare professional about a potential pain management plan. If you are currently being prescribed a medication like methadone or buprenorphine, your regular dose will not treat labor pain or pain from a C-section.
- Let hospital staff know if you are being treated with methadone or buprenorphine so they don't give you medications such as Nubain or Stadol, which can cause opioid withdrawal.
- Connect with resources and supports early in your pregnancy and make a list of people who can help you after the baby is born. Your healthcare professional, certified peer recovery specialist, and other resources listed in this brochure can help.

YOUR HOSPITAL STAY

- Babies who are prenatally exposed to opioids or opioid treatment medications may need to stay in the hospital to be observed for symptoms of withdrawal. These symptoms are called NAS. NAS is a medical condition that is temporary and treatable.

- Some babies with NAS are given medication in the hospital to help with their withdrawal symptoms. Babies need to be weaned off this medication before they can go home. This can take anywhere from three to seven days or longer.
- If your baby has NAS, you may be able to stay at the hospital with them.
- During this time, the hospital team will work with you to develop a Plan of Safe Care, which is a personalized list of resources and supports for you and your baby.

Your First Weeks with Baby

- Parents play an important role in watching their baby for withdrawal symptoms and helping them feel better. Holding your baby skin-to-skin or breastfeeding are some of the ways you can help comfort your baby.
- Remember to take care of yourself, too. Get plenty of rest. Ask for help when you need it.