

Daddy-to-be smokes pot ? Will it show up in baby-to-be? ^[1]

Dear Alice,

My question is regarding marijuana and child birth. My wife is due in March and I have heard from a friend that the last month of her pregnancy I will have to stop smoking because the newborn will test positive for marijuana. I have searched far and wide the past few weeks with no solid evidence or even articles of discussion regarding this topic. Is it possible to continue enjoying my patience enhancement drug (marijuana) through the end of the pregnancy or will I have to resort to drinking heavily to deal with the mood swings until after the child is born.

Thoughts?

You friendly local neighborhood pothead,

Smokey Joe

Answer

Dear Smokey Joe,

As a Papa-to-be, it's great you are considering the effects of second hand marijuana smoke on your family. Your concern is warranted ? the second hand smoke could be harmful to both baby and mother. Have you thought about consuming pot in food-form (cookies or brownies, for example) rather than smoking? You stated that drinking would be your back-up plan in dealing with the mood swings until the baby is born. Does this mean you would resume smoking after the baby is born? This, too, could be harmful to both your child and your wife.

Second hand smoke primarily affects two important systems: the airways (lungs, throat, mouth, etc.) and the brain. The airways of children in particular are vulnerable to carcinogenic (cancer-causing) and other harmful agents found in second hand smoke that result from combustion. There are two forms of second hand smoke: mainstream smoke, which comes from the smoke exhaled by the smoker, and sidestream smoke which comes from the burning end of your joint. Marijuana smoke has been linked to lung cancer and other respiratory complications such as emphysema, bronchial infections, and asthma. Contrary to the myth that only tobacco smoke contains harmful substances, analyses of marijuana smoke reveals multiple carcinogens.

Direct harm won't necessarily come to a developing fetus' airways (as they will to a baby's), but the brain can be affected as well as the overall development of the newborn. One study

found that smoking marijuana in the third trimester negatively impacted infant mental and motor development. The New England Journal of Medicine has published numerous studies linking marijuana use during pregnancy to decreases in birth weight and size. In addition, the American Academy of Pediatrics has published studies that found maternal marijuana use was associated with features similar to fetal alcohol syndrome. Although your wife isn't smoking directly, if she is inhaling your second hand smoke, there is certainly a possibility of consequences for the infant once s/he is born. Additionally, because marijuana is not regulated, it may be "treated" with chemicals that decrease odor, increase weight, increase potency, etc. These chemicals can increase toxicity beyond that of "pure" marijuana.

Have you explored other possibilities for regulating your mood swings? Alcohol or pot consumption may be possibilities, but they may not be the healthiest because of the addictive properties and the adverse health consequences. Many people who habitually use pot or alcohol do so in order to self-medicate depression and/or anxiety. Seeking individual therapy or group support may be helpful in working through underlying issues that may be contributing to the mood swings you mentioned. Therapy and group support can also be helpful if you decide to quit smoking. Additionally, a health care provider may be able to prescribe antidepressants or other medications that could be helpful for you, as well.

Congratulations on entering the realm of parenthood and kudos to you for looking after the health of the newest addition to your family.

Take care,

Alice!

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