

# Perinatal Cannabis Use

*The walk from the waiting room to the exam room is an opportunity for medical assistants to "walk and talk" with patients. Here is a script that shows how a medical assistant can provide education and support to patients about the risk of perinatal cannabis use.*

Background: As more states legalize cannabis use, increasing numbers of pregnant individuals report using cannabis to manage symptoms such as depression, anxiety, nausea, and pain. However, legalization does not mean cannabis use is safe during pregnancy or breastfeeding. Cannabis exposure during pregnancy, breastfeeding, or while trying to get pregnant has been associated with adverse health outcomes for parents and their offspring, including reduced fertility, increased risk of miscarriage and low birth weight, and long-term cognitive and behavioral effects in children exposed prenatally. Providing patients with accurate, non-stigmatizing education about these risks, along with supportive resources and counseling, can help reduce adverse outcomes and promote healthier individuals, pregnancies, and children.

Medical Assistant: \*calls patient from the waiting room\*

Patient: \*walks back to hallway\*

Medical Assistant: Hi, how have you been?

Patient: Not too bad.

Medical Assistant: Glad to hear it! We're sharing this card with all of our patients of reproductive age. It provides accurate information about the risks of cannabis use if you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or trying to get pregnant. Even though cannabis is legal in many places, there is no known safe amount if you are pregnant or breastfeeding and it can have long term health impacts for babies and children who are exposed to cannabis prenatally or through breastmilk.

\*hands postcard with graphic to patient\*

Patient: Okay, thanks. Good to know.

Medical Assistant: You're welcome! If you have questions or are concerned about how cannabis is affecting your health, please talk with the doctor and explore the supportive resources available on the back of the card.



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