

Talking with Patients About Pregnancy and Managing Pain



Clinicians play an important role in guiding and supporting patients who are pregnant or are in the postpartum period (8 weeks after pregnancy). Clinicians can help patients with managing their pain safely and effectively, including when they use opioids for pain management.



Here are some examples of approaches that you can use to address pain management during pregnancy and postpartum:

► Acknowledge the patient's concerns, including the health of their baby.

For example:

- “Pregnancy can be hard, and managing pain is a concern for a lot of pregnant women. Our top priority is taking care of you and your fetus/infant. Can you tell me how you’ve been feeling lately?”
- “Recovering after pregnancy can be hard, and managing pain is a concern for a lot of people. Our top priority is taking care of you and your infant. Can you tell me how you’ve been feeling lately?”

► Emphasize the patient's role in decision-making to convey respect and empower them.

For example, “This can be a tough time, and I want you to know I’m here to give you the support and care you need. You’re in charge of how we create your treatment plan.”

► Prioritize non-medication and nonopioid therapies to manage pain.

For example:

- “During your pregnancy, our first goal in managing your pain will be to find treatment options that work for you. We’ll start with options that are known to be safer for both you and your fetus, like [provide nonopioid options appropriate for the patient]. Let’s explore these treatment options together and decide which ones could help you the most.”
- “After your pregnancy, let’s try treatment options that are known to be safer for both you and your infant, like [provide nonopioid options appropriate for the patient]. If you’re interested, let’s talk about these options and work together to create a personalized pain management plan that fits your needs.”

► **If opioid therapy may be an appropriate option for a particular patient, address the potential risks and benefits of opioids and treatment goals.**

For example:

- “Given your specific situation, opioids may be the best option to manage your pain. Let’s talk about the possible risks and benefits of using opioid medications, especially [during/after] pregnancy. What concerns do you have about taking opioids?”
- “I want to make sure you’re aware that opioid use has some serious, potential risks. One of these risks is opioid use disorder. What questions do you have about risks?”

► **Ensure patients have access to information and resources that fit their unique needs.**

For example, “This can be a lot to take in, but we’re here to guide you and help you find the help you need. We can give you printouts that cover what we talked about and connect you to helpful resources. What other questions do you have? Are there other ways I can support you?”



You may also work with pregnant or postpartum women with opioid use disorder. Here are some examples of approaches you can use in this situation:

► **Engage patients with a nonjudgmental approach by clarifying that your goal is to support them in a way that works for them.**

For example:

- “I want you to know that you’re not alone in this. Many people face challenges with opioid use, and asking for help is an important first step. You and your [fetus/infant] are important to us. Can you tell me more about your experiences and why you’re seeking help for opioid use?”
- “We’ll work together to develop a pain management plan that focuses on taking care of you and your [fetus/infant]. Let’s talk about your opioid use disorder diagnosis and how you think this will affect your pain management.”

Want to know more?

Check out the following links for more information on related topics.

- www.cdc.gov/opioid-use-during-pregnancy/about/ About Opioid Use During Pregnancy
- www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/hcp/clinical-guidance/linkage-to-care.html
- www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/hcp/clinical-care/nonopioid-therapies-for-pain-management.html
- www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/hcp/clinical-care/opioid-use-and-pregnancy.html
- www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/hcp/trainings/opioid-use-and-pregnancy.html
- www.cdc.gov/opioid-use-during-pregnancy/treatment/
- www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/rr/rr7103a1.htm