

# Pregnancy and Pain Management



**You may experience pain while pregnant and during the period after your pregnancy. You have many options to help manage your pain. Talk with your doctor to decide on a treatment plan that can effectively manage your pain while also protecting your health and your baby's health.**

## What are some of my options for pain management?

Your doctor can recommend medicines that are safe to take during and after your pregnancy. They may also recommend treatments that aren't medicines—like ice, heat, rest, or exercise programs—or a combination of treatments to help manage your pain.<sup>1</sup> If you're worried about insurance covering some of these options, like exercise programs, ask your doctor if they know about any low-cost options.

In some cases, your doctor may recommend you use an opioid medicine to manage your pain.

## What are opioids?

Opioids are one type of medicine that can help manage pain. As with all medicines, it's important to weigh risks against benefits with your doctor. Some common opioids that your doctor may recommend are:

- Oxycodone
- Hydrocodone
- Morphine
- Codeine

## What are the risks of using opioids?

One serious, potential risk when using opioids is overdose, but using a medicine called naloxone at the right time can reverse an overdose.<sup>2</sup> Another potential risk from opioid use is opioid use disorder (OUD), also known as opioid abuse.

<sup>1</sup> Dowell D, Ragan KR, Jones CM, Baldwin GT, Chou R. CDC Clinical Practice Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Pain— United States, 2022. MMWR Recomm Rep 2022;71(No. RR-3):1–95. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.rr7103a1>

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Lifesaving Naloxone. 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/stopoverdose/naloxone/index.html>



## PREGNANCY AND PAIN MANAGEMENT

Talk with your doctor about all medicines you're taking and **only take opioids that your doctor gives you**. You can also talk with them about getting friends and family ready to use naloxone in case of a breathing emergency during an overdose. Opioid use during pregnancy can have serious risks to your baby's health. For example, opioid use during pregnancy may be related to certain birth defects. Another serious, potential risk is the development of neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS). NAS is a group of expected and treatable conditions that can happen when newborns experience withdrawal from certain substances, including opioids. Your doctor can let you know the signs to look out for and work with you to plan for NAS, if needed.



Opioids can pass to your baby through your breast milk and may put your baby at risk of experiencing drowsiness and breathing problems. Your doctor can help you decide on a pain management plan if you decide to breastfeed while using opioids.<sup>3</sup>

### Can I stop using opioids?

Quickly stopping an opioid at any time can cause problems. Talk with your doctor if you would like to change your pain management plan. They may consult other doctors who specialize in managing opioid use during and after pregnancy.

**If you would like to stop using opioids after your pregnancy, you and your doctor can work together to make a plan to slowly stop or lower your opioid use, known as tapering.**

### More Resources

For more information on opioid use and pregnancy, check out:

- [Opioid Use During Pregnancy](#)
- [About Opioid Use During Pregnancy](#)
- [FindTreatment.gov](#)
- [MotherToBaby's fact sheets](#)

<sup>3</sup> National Institutes of Health. Drugs and Lactation Database (LactMed®). Oxycodone.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK501245/>