



Harm Reduction Approach: Nutrition and Substance Use in Pregnancy

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Land Acknowledgement



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Overview:

Nutrition and Substance Use in Pregnancy

01

Substance Use and
Nutrition
Background

02

Risks of Substance
Use in Pregnancy
and Breastfeeding

03

Nutrition-based
Harm Reduction
Strategies for
Substance Use in
Pregnancy

04

Nutrition
Resources for
Substance Use in
Pregnancy

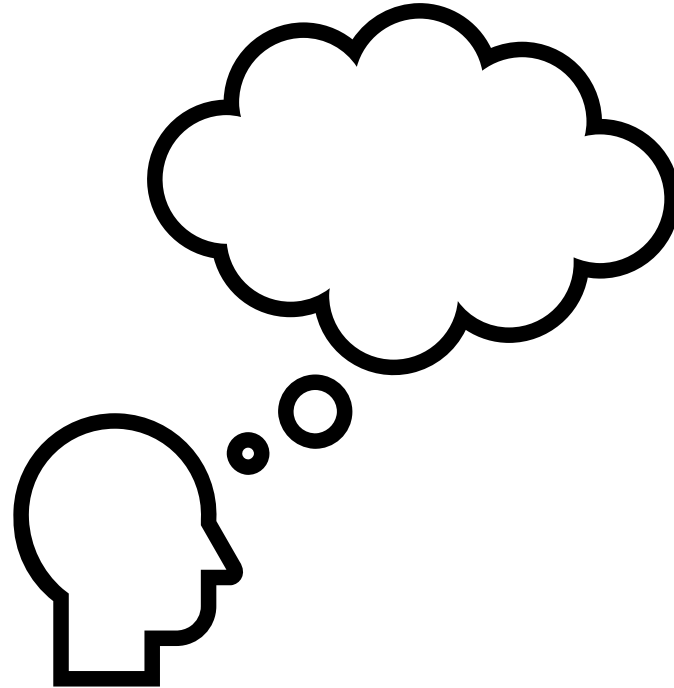



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How does stigma affect pregnancy care for people using substances?





Substance Use and Nutrition Background

Reasons for Substance Use



Medical purposes



Religious or ceremonial purposes



Personal enjoyment



To cope with stress, trauma or pain

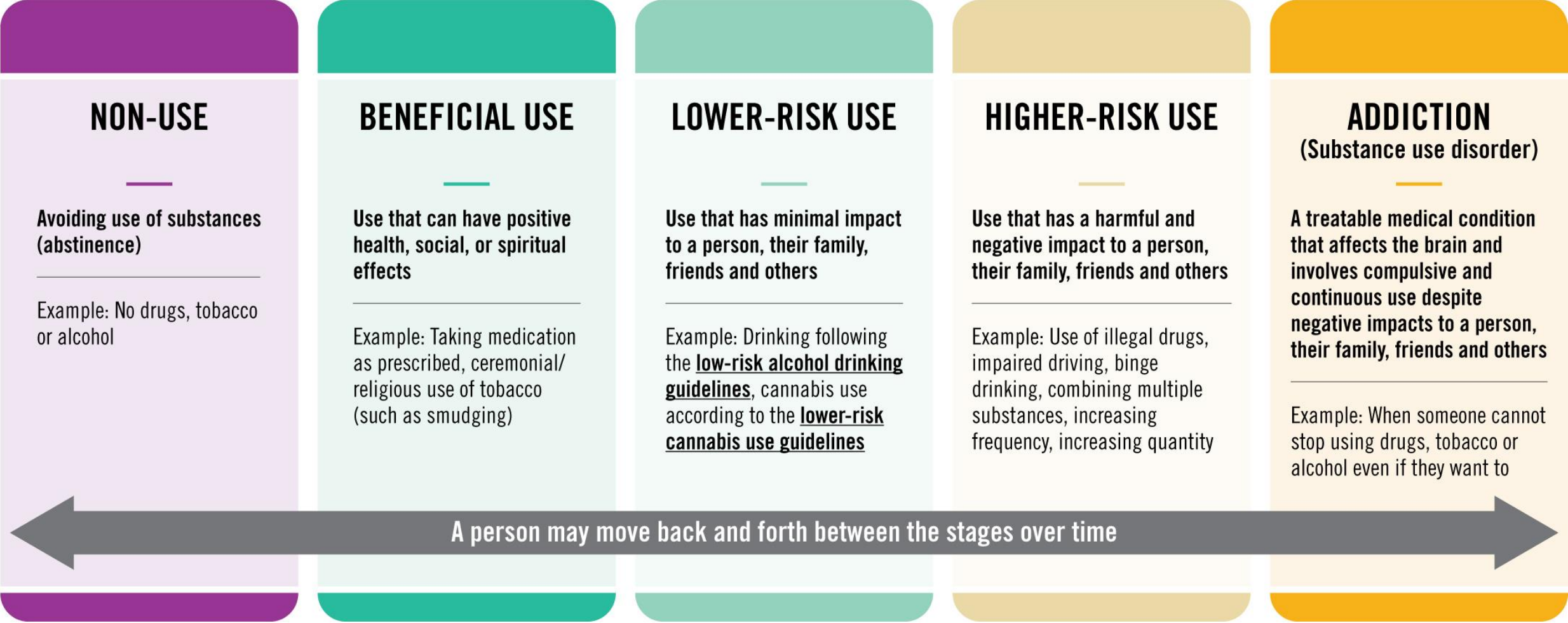


The Impact of Substance Use on Nutritional Health

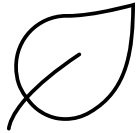
- Malnutrition
- Nutrient deficiencies – ex: Iron deficiency
- Metabolic disorders
- Changes in body composition
- Poor mental health
- Disordered eating habits – ex: Pica
- Gut problems – ex: heartburn and constipation
- Money is being used to pay for substances rather than for food
- People recovering from substance use disorder might get confused between craving substances and craving food (addiction transfer)



Substance Use Spectrum



Commonly Used Substances in Pregnancy



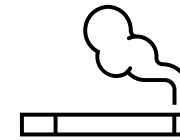
Cannabis



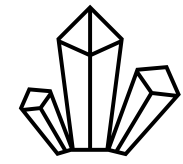
Opioids



Alcohol



Nicotine



Amphetamines



Harm Reduction Approach

What is a Harm Reduction Approach?



Offering safe supplies

Clean needles and injection supplies
Clean condoms, and other birth control options
Naloxone/Narcan kits



Providing training

Clean injection techniques
Safer smoking practices
Assist in cutting down or slowly stopping substance use



Connecting clients with healthcare support

Perinatal care
STI testing
Substance use treatment



Offering nutrition support

Providing snacks at health centres



Adopting a non-judgmental approach

Reduce stigmas
Build an open and trusting relationship



Offering evidence-based information

Discuss substance use risks
Support well-informed choices

Harm Reduction: Interdisciplinary Approach

- Addiction specialists
- Social workers
- Registered Dietitians
- Registered Nurses
- Mental health support





Risks of Substance Use in Pregnancy

Substance Use Risks in Pregnancy

	Opioids	Cocaine	Amphetamines	Cannabis	Tobacco	Alcohol
Miscarriage	X	X		X	X	
Placental disruptions		X			X	
Preterm birth	X	X	X	X	X	
Intrauterine growth restriction		X		X	X	X
Low birth weight	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fetal death		X	X	X	X	
Respiratory disorders/failure	X				X	
Decreased fertility				X		
Present in breast milk	X		X	×	×	×
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders						X
Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome	X				X	X



Nutrition, Cannabis Use, and Pregnancy

Cannabis Use in Pregnancy

- One of the most widely used substances during pregnancy.
- Some people may think it's safe during pregnancy because it's legalized in Canada.
- Cannabis is not advised during pregnancy.
- Using cannabis during pregnancy has been linked to more use of other substances like nicotine or alcohol.



Nutrition Impacts of Cannabis Use in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

- Changes in appetite
- Changes in food preferences
- Some people may decide to use cannabis to help with nausea or morning sickness
- Cannabis can go into the baby through breast milk and might affect the baby's health and growth





Nutrition, Opioid Use, and Pregnancy

Opioid Use in Pregnancy



Fentanyl

Oxycodone

Heroin

Morphine

Codeine

Nutrition Impacts of Opioid Use in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

- Constipation
- Forgetting to eat/drink
- Gut issues which can lead to low appetite
- Opioids cost a lot of money, and this may make it hard for someone to buy food.
- Opioids can go into the baby through breast milk and might affect the baby's health and growth.

Withdrawal can lead to:

- Diarrhea
- Cravings for sugary snacks or treats



Nutrition Benefits of Opioid Treatment in Pregnancy

- Higher birth weight
- Lower risk of premature birth
- More likely to get involved in prenatal care and recovery
- Helps clients eat better



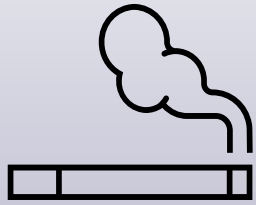


Nutrition, Alcohol Use, and Pregnancy

Nutrition Impacts of Alcohol Use in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

- Nutrient deficiencies (B vitamins, Vitamin D, and iron)
- Low appetite
- Lower production of breast milk
- Dehydration
- Alcohol is transferred into breastmilk – which can put the baby at risk for poor growth and possible developmental delays
- Gut problems which may lead to malnourishment
- Difficulties choosing a balanced diet





Nutrition, Nicotine Use, and Pregnancy

Nutrition Impacts of Nicotine/Vape Use in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

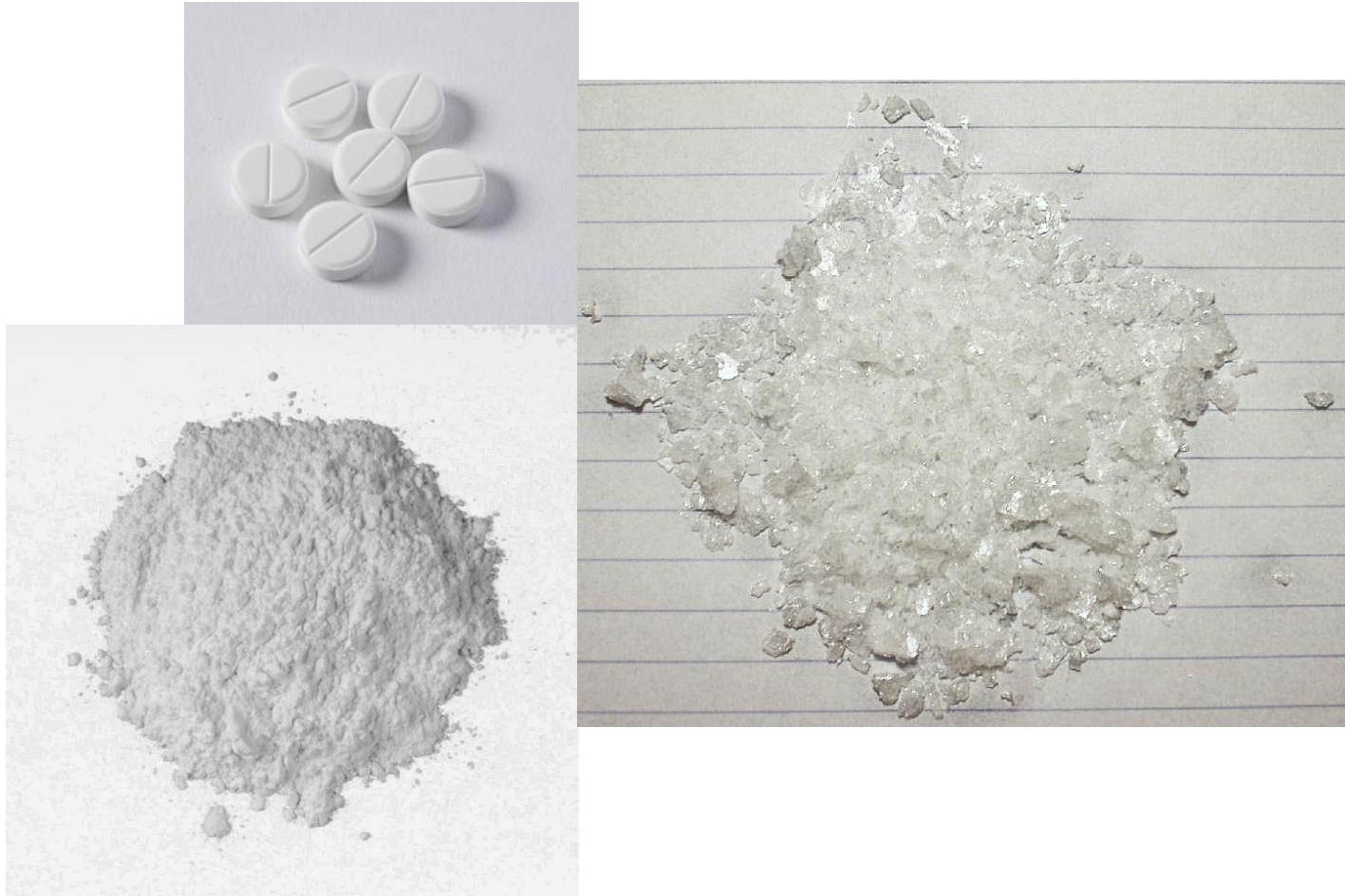
- Low appetite
- Poor weight gain
- Dehydration
- Anemia
- Lower production of breast milk
- Can pass along harmful chemicals from cigarettes to their babies in breast milk





Nutrition, Amphetamine Use, and Pregnancy

Amphetamine Use in Pregnancy



Adderall

Concerta

Ritalin

Methamphetamines

Nutrition Impacts of Amphetamine Use in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

- Methamphetamines can harm teeth, making it hard to chew food.
- Low appetite
- Weight loss in a short amount of time
- Dehydration
- Amphetamines can go into the baby through breast milk and might affect the baby's health and growth.



The Benefits of Breastfeeding – even with Substance Use

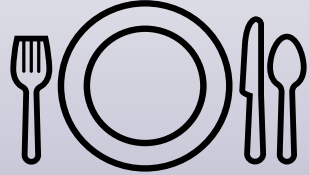
Gives the baby very good nutrition.

It is good for the health of the pregnant person too.

Supports emotional health and reduces anxiety.

Fosters a stronger bond with the baby.





Nutrition with Substance Use in Pregnancy

Food as Harm Reduction (FaHR) Study

Using substances may make it harder to get enough food because of:

Loss of appetite

Stigma

Not having enough money to buy food

In the study, participants knew that substance use was bad for their nutrition. To lessen the effects, they:

Tried to access food consistently

Took nutrition supplements (e.g. Ensure, vitamins)

Ate small meals or snacks despite not feeling very hungry

Drank more fluids to avoid dehydration

Food as Harm Reduction (FaHR) Recommendations

1. Give meals in safe and supportive spaces.
2. Offer fruit and vegetables with different textures for those with teeth problems.
3. Provide various meals, especially ones that feel like home-cooked food.
4. Make inviting spaces with clear rules and membership guidelines.
5. Focus on respect, support, and care to create a safe environment beyond just offering food.



The Benefits of Nutrition During Pregnancy and Substance Use

Helps the body heal and stay strong.

Helps to keep the mood stable and reduces stress.

Reduces cravings for substances.

Addresses other health problems from substance use.

Encourages self-care and a healthy lifestyle.

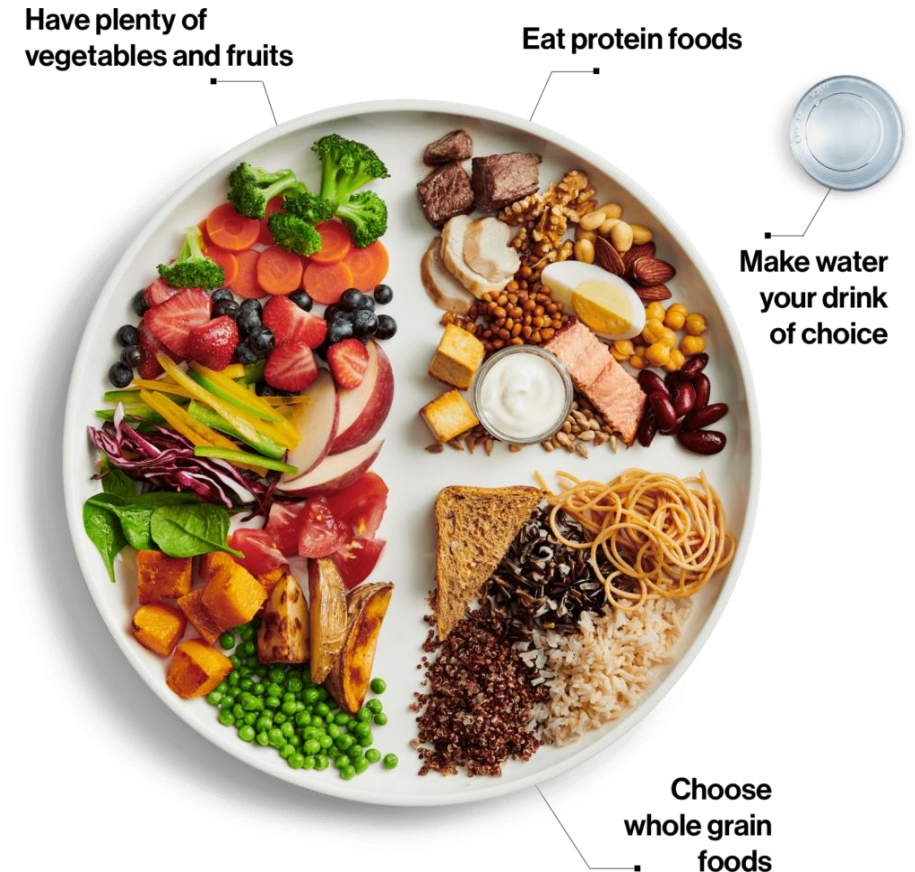
Improves health for the pregnant person and the baby.

Lowers substance use risks.



Nutrition Tips for Substance Use and Pregnancy

- Take a multivitamin
- Eat a variety of foods
- Drink plenty of water
- Eat regular meals and snacks
- Eat according to the balanced plate model
- Seek out food support where needed

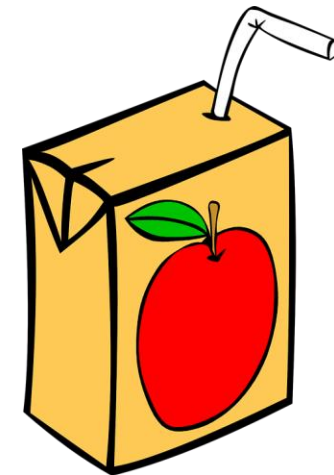


Supporting Pregnant Clients at the Clinic

- Offer everyone who walks in a cup of water while they wait.

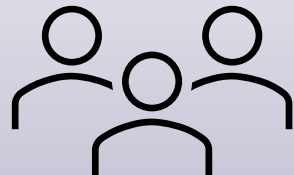
Snack ideas:

- Granola bars
- Fruit bars
- Unsalted nuts
- Juice boxes



Symptoms of Substance Use and Nutrition

Low Appetite	Nausea, Vomiting, or Diarrhea	Dehydration and Headaches
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose foods that are full of nutrition.• Drink fluids at least 30 minutes before or after meals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drink plenty of fluids.• Choose foods that are easy to digest. Starchy, plain foods (e.g., bannock, rice) are easy to digest.• Avoid spicy, smelly, or greasy foods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drink plenty of fluids.



Nutrition Resources for Substance Use in Pregnancy

Nutrition Resources for Substance Use in Pregnancy

- [The Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic \(AIVCC\)](#)
- [Canada Prenatal Nutrition Programs \(CPNP\)](#) on reserve and off reserve program
- [The AHS Indigenous Wellness Clinic](#)
- "[Take a Multivitamin when Pregnant](#)" AHS handout
- [AHS Nutrition for Pregnancy and Lactation](#) webpage
- [AHS food safety conversation cards](#)
- "[The Role of Nutrition in the Pathway to Wellness](#)" Handout
- Connect with a dietitian through [Health Link at 811](#)
- Call 211 for local food hampers
- Food Banks and the WECAN food baskets
- [Best Start Resource Centre](#) (Ontario-based)



Substance Use Helplines



The Addiction Helpline is available 24/7 toll-free at 1-866-332-2322



The Alberta Opioid Recovery Program is available at 1-844-383-7688



For help quitting smoking the Alberta Quits helpline is available toll-free at 1-866-710-QUIT (7848)

Substance Use Treatment Centres for First Nations and Inuit in Alberta

Beaver Lake
Wah Pow
Treatment
Centre

Blood Tribe
Youth Wellness
Centre

Footprints
Healing Centre

Kainai Healing
Lodge Centre

Kapown
Rehabilitation
Centre

Wood Buffalo
Wellness
Society (Mark
Amy Centre)

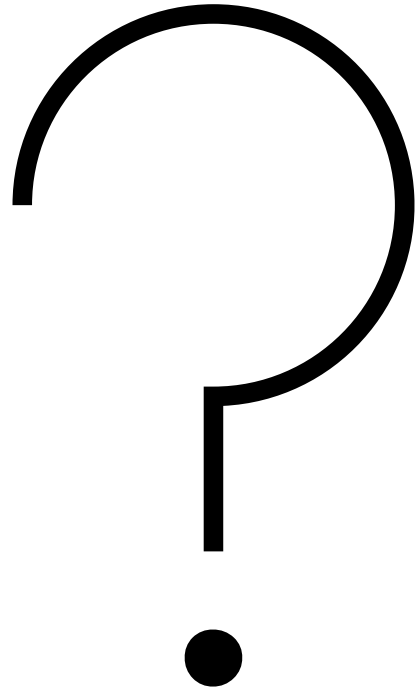


Call Alberta Regional Referral
Coordinator at (780) 495-2345

List of Accredited Residential Addiction Treatment Facilities in Alberta

Athabasca	Blackfoot	Bonnyville	Calgary	Clairmont	Claresholm
Cold Lake	Delburne	Drayton Valley	Dumheller	Edmonton	Fort Macleod
Fort McMurray	Glendon	Grande Prairie	High Prairie	High River	Lethbridge
Medicine Hat	Nordegg	Priddis	Red Deer	Standoff	Sturgeon County
		Tees	Westlock		

Questions



Contributors

- Erin Bligh
- Tessa Hubbell
- Grace Wong
- Dave Smith
- Stephanie Imumorin – Team Lead of FNIHB Mental Wellness Team
- Courtney Clendenning
- Callie Bouchard
- Kathleen Gibson

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- [Residential addiction treatment service providers | Alberta.ca](#)