I thought breastfeeding was the best choice for my baby?

Breastfeeding has many benefits for your baby. **Marijuana** is a drug that passes easily into your breast milk and can be harmful to your baby. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that if you are using Marijuana, you should NOT breastfeed.

What is Marijuana?

Marijuana is a commonly used illegal drug that goes under many names including: Cannabis, Grass, Mary Jane, Pot, Reefer, Roach and Weed, among others. Marijuana is typically smoked or ingested. The drug's active ingredient is tetrahydrocannabinol or THC.

Why is it harmful to my baby?

THC is stored in your body fat for 4 to 6 weeks. A baby's brain and body are made up of a lot of fat and may store this THC for a long time. THC is found in the urine of breastfeeding babies for up to 3 weeks. **Important brain growth occurs in your baby's first months of life.** Marijuana contaminated breast milk may alter brain cells or hinder the baby's brain and nervous system development.

Are there any other risks to Marijuana use while breastfeeding?

- It can cause sleepiness in your infant that may lead to poor or slow weight gain.
- Infants may have decreased muscle tone and not suck well.
- Smoking Marijuana or tobacco around your baby causes inhalation of second-hand smoke which increases the risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- Marijuana smoking can impair your judgment and lead to a decreased ability to adequately care for your baby.
- Marijuana may also affect the quality and decrease the quantity of your breast milk.

Can’t I just “Pump and Dump” after I use Marijuana?

After smoking or eating marijuana, it takes days or weeks for marijuana to completely leave the body. Marijuana binds to fat in your body. Breast milk contains a lot of fat and may contain a high concentration of marijuana for a long period of time. “Pumping and dumping” your breast milk will not work in the same way as it does with other drugs that leave the body faster.

What steps can I take to be able to breastfeed my baby?

- Refrain from Marijuana use and stay away from others who are smoking it.
- NICU/CCN infants: Ask your NICU physician about random urine screening.
- Protect your milk supply by obtaining a double electric breast pump. Most insurance companies do cover the purchase of a breast pump. Renting a hospital grade pump is the best option if you can afford it. Pump your breasts every 3 hours around the clock until you have at least 25 ounces of breast milk per day. You can then drop 1 pumping at night for a maximum 6 hour stretch.
- Discard the milk until your physician gives you permission to breastfeed.
- Seek help from the lactation department at BMC. 413-794-5312.

References:

