

## APPENDIX- D

# *Marijuana and Breastfeeding*

### *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:**

American Academy of Pediatrics, (2012). Breastfeeding and the use of human milk. *Pediatrics*, 129(3), 827-841.

Garry A, Rigourd V, Amirouche A, Fauroux V, Aubry S, Serreau R., (2009). Cannabis and breast-feeding, *Journal of Toxicology*; 2009:596149

Hale, Thomas, PhD (2014). *Medications and Mothers' Milk*, 16<sup>th</sup> Edition. Plano, TX: Hale Publishing LP.