



SUBSTANCE USE AND PREGNANCY DURING COVID-19

THE SETTING

The fight against COVID-19 continues throughout the U.S., increasing stress and anguish among vulnerable populations struggling with substance use. Among those vulnerable populations, pregnant women present major concerns as they face an increase in adversity during the wake of the global pandemic.

With correlations presenting evidence between substance use and COVID-19 among vulnerable and at-risk populations, an alarming concern remains on whether pregnant women struggling with substance use are receiving support and adequate resources during this challenging time. The broad amount of COVID-19 research shows a lack of evidence regarding this specific population.

THE SCIENCE

In 2017, SAMHSA found an increase in substance use among pregnant women who were past month substance users from the year 2016¹. Their research also showed there was an increase every year between 2015 and 2017¹. Among Hispanic pregnant women numbers in recent research available from 2018 shows a decline in past month users in comparison to 2017 showing: 5.4% used illicit drugs compared to 1.0%, 9.0% used tobacco compared to 5.2%, 3.0% used marijuana compared to 1.0%¹. There was no opioid data found in 2018, however overall in 2017 0.9% used opioids compared to 1.4% of pregnant women in 2018¹. Alcohol consumption in Hispanic pregnant women between the ages of 15-44 in 2018 was at 6.2% and overall 9.9% used alcohol in 2017 compared to 11.5% in 2018¹. Although, this research shows declining numbers as of 2018, the question yet remains as to how maternal stress levels and additional adversities are impacting pregnant women at this time, given the fact isolation and physical distancing increases stress and alcohol consumption for some⁸.

THE FACTS

- ❖ The National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded a study, revealing that individuals with Substance Use Disorders (SUDs) show a higher susceptibility to COVID-19 and face major complications leading to elevated rates of hospitalizations and death rates². Their study revealed that 15.6% of cases from over 73 million COVID-19 case were patients diagnosed with SUDs².
- ❖ In a research study conducted by RAND Corp., it was stated that women are turning to alcohol consumption with an increase of 41% in heavy or binge drinking since the beginning of the pandemic³.
 - Of these percentages, it is unknown what percentage of pregnant women find themselves battling substance use during COVID-19.
- ❖ The Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment found that as of 2018, only 23% of SUD facilities have specialized treatment for pregnant and postpartum women, and there is a low prevalence of these facilities in the South and Midwest states⁴.
- ❖ Mental health and alcohol consumption is a concern during this time due to parenting stress being higher with families reporting emotional changes, leading to a concern for families of individuals with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder who are known to experience higher levels of parenting stress⁵.

OUR TEAM AT YOUR SERVICE:

[Pierluigi Mancini PhD, Director](#)

[Maxine Henry, MSW, MBA, Co-Director](#)

[Ruth Yáñez, MSW, Executive Adm Asst.](#)



SUBSTANCE USE AND PREGNANCY DURING COVID-19 - SOLUTIONS

THE SOLUTION

It is a difficult time for everyone, especially those facing more adversities such as pregnant women. Health providers and mental health providers must be highly vigilant in caring for pregnant women and should consider providing the following tools and resources, according to American Society of Addiction Medicine⁶:

- ❖ Provide education and resources to pregnant patients regarding COVID-19
- ❖ Access to telehealth, including telephonic visits with flexible availability
- ❖ Help manage maternal stress and maternal anxiety
- ❖ Increase efforts to maintain patient engagement in treatment
- ❖ Help women develop a COVID-19 birth plan
- ❖ Implement infection control and mitigation procedures
- ❖ Continue to support comprehensive care

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers the following Guidelines for Pregnant Women during COVID-19⁷:

- ❖ Take steps to protect yourself
- ❖ Continue to seek healthcare
- ❖ Get recommended vaccines and a 30- day supply for medicines
- ❖ Call healthcare provider with any concerns
- ❖ Do not delay getting emergency care because of COVID-19

What Can you do?⁸:

- ❖ Being outdoors for physical activity, such as walking
- ❖ Talk to Friends
- ❖ Eat Well
- ❖ Getting plenty of rest
- ❖ Engage in healthy coping strategies for stress, such as: Baking, taking a warm bath, journaling, listening to soothing music
- ❖ Connect with Organization(s) and providers for help such as your prenatal clinic, OB-GYN provider, Therapist, Community Health Worker

For more information about the National Hispanic and Latino Addiction Technology Transfer Center and to request Training and Technical Assistance please visit us at:

<https://attcnetwork.org/centers/national-hispanic-and-latino-attc/home>

¹<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/release/2018-national-survey-drug-use-and-health-nsduh-releases>

²<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/substance-use-disorders-linked-covid-19-susceptibility>

³<https://www.rand.org/news/press/2020/09/29.html>

⁴[https://www.journalofsubstanceabusetreatment.com/article/S0740-5472\(19\)30257-0/fulltext](https://www.journalofsubstanceabusetreatment.com/article/S0740-5472(19)30257-0/fulltext)

⁵<https://theconversation.com/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder-amid-covid-19-fewer-services-potential-boost-in-rates-145593>

⁶<https://www.asam.org/Quality-Science/covid-19-coronavirus/treating-pregnant-people-with-oud>

⁷<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html>

⁸<https://preventionconversation.org/2020/07/06/alcohol-pregnancy-and-your-mental-health-during-covid-19/>

Please visit the following websites for more COVID-19 and support information:

SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline

Toll Free: 1-800-985-5990 (español e inglés)

Text in Spanish: Envíe "Háblanos" al 66746

Text in English: "TalkWithUs" al 66746

(TTY): 1-800-846-8517

English: <http://www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>

Spanish: <https://www.samhsa.gov/disaster-distress-helpline/espanol>

SAMHSA's National Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP (24/7/365 Treatment Referral Information Service in English and Español)

Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Toll Free: 1-888-628-9454

English: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

(TTY): 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)

Spanish:

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/en-espanol/>

English: <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

SAMHSA Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator

Website: <https://findtreatment.gov>

CDC's Considerations for Inpatient Obstetric Healthcare Settings:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/inpatient-obstetric-healthcare-guidance.html>

Pregnancy, Breastfeeding, and Caring for Newborns:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html>

Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine COVID-19 Resources:

<https://www.smfm.org/covidclinical>

World Health Organization Guidance on Breastfeeding and COVID-19:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-on-covid-19-and-breastfeeding>

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

<http://www.aa.org>