



# **Exposure to Psychotropic Medications and Other Substances During Pregnancy and Lactation: A Handbook for Health Care Providers**

*CAMH, Motherrisk*

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# Exposure to Psychotropic Medications and Other Substances During Pregnancy and Lactation: A Handbook for Health Care Providers

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A great deal of misinformation exists about women's use of substances during pregnancy and lactation. A health care provider's challenge is to know the true risks and benefits, both to the mother and to her fetus or baby, of taking versus stopping the use of a medication or other substance. Yet the average provider is not well equipped to give the best advice to women who are pregnant or breastfeeding and exposed to psychotropics. - "Is it ever safe to drink alcohol when breastfeeding?" - "What are the risks to the baby if the mother uses cannabis while pregnant or breastfeeding?" - "Are the effects of smoking different during pregnancy versus during breastfeeding?" - "Can a woman safely breastfeed her baby when taking codeine?" Exposure to Psychotropic Medications and Other Substances during Pregnancy and Lactation: A Handbook for Health Care Providers is a convenient source of evidence-based information and recommendations on these and many other questions for primary care physicians, psychiatrists, pharmacists, obstetricians, midwives, public health nurses and nurse practitioners. The handbook: - details the properties and effects of many psychotropic medications and other substances, and provides recommendations for how to advise women using these substances - dispels common myths about drug exposure during pregnancy and lactation - discusses key principles for clinical approaches to working with pregnant or breastfeeding women who use psychotropic medications or other substances - covers screening best practices and provides screening tools - explores the critical therapeutic role that all health professionals can play in helping women move toward better health outcomes for themselves and their babies. The production of this handbook has been made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada.

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