

## Patient information factsheet

# Methadone and pregnancy

There are many advantages of being on a methadone programme compared to other opiates while you are pregnant:

- Regular dose
- Long acting
- Free
- Legal
- Non-injectable
- Accompanied by support, medical care and counselling

Methadone does not cause damage to:

- Bones
- Liver
- Brain
- Heart
- Reproductive system
- Immune system

If you are on a methadone programme you should tell your midwife at the time you book for maternity care. Your midwife will refer you to an obstetric consultant who will closely monitor you and your baby to try to reduce the risks for you both.

You will be offered regular scans to ensure your baby is growing well.

If you or your partner have used IV drugs in the past you are recommended to have a blood test to see if you have contracted Hepatitis C. If this blood test shows that you have contracted Hepatitis C you will be referred to a liver specialist to discuss the future health of you and your baby.

You will have the opportunity to discuss appropriate pain relief in labour while you are pregnant.

If your veins have become damaged through IV drug use you may be referred to an anaesthetist in case you need to be given medication urgently at the time you give birth.

Babies often show signs of withdrawal shortly after birth but these signs may develop later so you may need to stay in hospital for up to two weeks after you have given birth to ensure your baby is well. Babies are usually able to stay with their mothers during this time. You will be offered an appointment with a consultant neonatologist whilst you are pregnant to discuss a plan of care for your baby.

If you are on a stable dose of methadone you may breastfeed.

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## Risks for mothers and babies

There is no evidence that methadone use causes abnormalities in babies.

- Stability is the key.
- You should only reduce your methadone under medical supervision.
- Sudden withdrawal is dangerous for your baby.
- Being stable on methadone is better than being unstable and taking other drugs on top.

## Help and support

Agencies offering treatment and advice in this area are:

### New Road Treatment and Advice Centre

023 8071 7171

### The Bridge

023 8088 1400

### Options

023 8063 0219

### 3D

023 8022 7704

### New Forest Drug Action Team

01425 483352

### FRANK

0800 776600

[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

### Karen Pulfer

Substance misuse specialist midwife

Princess Anne Hospital

Broadlands Birth Centre

E5

023 8079 6632

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Braille or on audio tape, please telephone  
023 8079 4688 for help.**