

**Illegal Drug Use****Definition/  
cut-off value**


---

For Pregnant Women, Breastfeeding and Non-Breastfeeding Postpartum:  
C Any illegal drug use

---

**Participant  
category and  
priority level**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Pregnant Women	I
Breastfeeding Women*	I
Non Breastfeeding Women	III

\* Breastfeeding is contraindicated for women with these conditions.

---

**Justification**

Pregnant women who smoke marijuana are frequently at higher risk of still birth, miscarriage, low birth weight babies and fetal abnormalities, especially of the nervous system. Heavy cocaine use has been associated with higher rates of miscarriage, premature onset of labor, IUGR, congenital anomalies, and developmental/behavioral abnormalities in the preschool years. Infants born to cocaine users often exhibit symptoms of cocaine intoxication at birth. Infants of women addicted to heroin, methadone, or other narcotics are more likely to be stillborn or to have low birth weights. These babies frequently must go through withdrawal soon after birth. Increased rates of congenital defects, growth retardation, and preterm delivery, have been observed in infants of women addicted to amphetamines.

Pregnant addicts often forget their own health care, adding to their unborn babies' risk. One study found that substance abusing women had lower hematocrit levels at the time of prenatal care registration, lower pregravid weights and gained less weight during the pregnancy. Since nutritional deficiencies can be expected among drug abusers, diet counseling and other efforts to improve food intake are recommended.

Heroin and cocaine are known to appear in human milk. Marijuana also appears in a poorly absorbed form but in quantities sufficient to cause lethargy, and decreased feeding after prolonged exposure.

---

**Clarifications/  
Guidelines**

Before assigning this risk code, be sure to document the illegal drug use on the health history form.

Illegal drug use must be self-reported, you cannot assign this risk code based on suspicion.

If a participant states she does not smoke marijuana, but inhales the smoke, assign this risk code.

---

**References**

1. USDA/DHHS Dietary Guidelines; 1995.
2. Lawrence, Ruth: Maternal & Child Health Technical Information Bulletin: A Review of the Medical Benefits and Contraindications to Breastfeeding in the United States; October 1997.
3. Weiner, L., Morse, B.A., and Garrido, P.: FAS/FAE Focusing Prevention on Women at Risk; International Journal of the Addictions; 1989; 24:385-395.
4. National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information; Office for Substance Abuse Prevention; The fact is...alcohol and other drugs can harm an unborn baby; Rockville; 1989.
5. Institute of Medicine: Nutrition During Pregnancy; National Academy of Press; 1990; pp. 88, 177, 391-394.
6. Jones, C. and Lopez, R.: Drug Abuse and Pregnancy; New Perspectives in Prenatal Care; 1990; pp. 273-318.
7. National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, Main Findings 1996; Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, DHHS.