

# Supporting Pregnant Loved Ones with Substance Use Disorders

Substance use disorder (SUD) is a complex medical condition, not a moral failing. It affects people's brain function and makes it hard to stop using substances, even when it harms their health and relationships. Many women and gender diverse people with substance use disorders have experienced trauma, including from people they have trusted. This can make it extra difficult to ask for support.

## How Family and Partners Can Help

Family and partners play an important role in supporting pregnant individuals. Small changes can create a safe, understanding environment that promotes better health for both parent and baby.

### Ways to Offer Support:

- Reduce or quit your own substance use to show support and create more substance free spaces.
- Help you partner find strategies to reduce their use. Any reduction in substance use can improve health. If quitting isn't possible right away, help your partner find strategies to reduce their use.
- Offer to attend prenatal visits to help build trust with health care providers.
- Offer to research options for treatment programs, support groups, or addiction specialists.
- Create as calm a home environment as possible.
- Recognize that change may take time. Offer support and compassion, not pressure and judgement.
- Provide practical support such as cooking meals, running errands, or providing transportation to appointments.





### Communication Tips for Positive Conversations

- **Use "I" statements:** Instead of "You need to stop," say, "I'm worried about you and the baby. How can I help?"
- **Listen without judgment:** Sometimes just listening without offering solutions is all that is needed.
- **Avoid shame and blame:** Blame makes change harder and can further isolate your loved one.
- **Acknowledge strengths:** It is hard to stop, or cut back, your substance use. It is important to recognize and validate their efforts to seek care or reduce use.
- **Speak with kindness and compassion**

### Self-Care for Caregivers

- Supporting someone with SUD can be emotionally draining, so it's also important to care for yourself:
- Consider getting support for yourself. You can join a support group or talk to a counselor or trusted friend.
- Protect your own wellbeing. It's important to stay well as you care for your loved one.
- Get enough sleep, eat well, and do things you enjoy.
- Learn more about substance use and substance use disorders. The more you understand SUD, the better you can support your loved one to reduce harms and make healthier choices.

**Your support can make all the difference in helping your loved one feel safe and capable of change!**



### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

#### MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

- » Suicide Crisis Helpline
- » Kids Help Phone
- » Hope for Wellness Hotline

#### SUBSTANCE USE SUPPORT

- » Services Available Across Canada
- » Thinking About Pregnancy

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

- » ShelterSafe
- » iHEAL App
- » Local Crisis Lines

#### PRENATAL SUPPORT

- » Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program

### TO LEARN MORE VISIT:

[pregnancyinfo.ca/  
substance-use-in-pregnancy](http://pregnancyinfo.ca/substance-use-in-pregnancy)

