

OPIOID USE DISORDER AND PREGNANCY

A pregnant woman who abuses opioid drugs may seriously damage two people: herself and her unborn child. While methadone and buprenorphine have both been shown to be safe and effective in pregnancy, there is a longer history, and more safety information about methadone. This is why **methadone is considered “the gold standard” for opioid use disorder treatment in pregnancy.** However, methadone isn't always available to pregnant women, and when it isn't, buprenorphine is a much safer choice than not using medication-assisted recoverySM (MAR). Naltrexone is NOT safe for use in pregnancy, so we'll use Opioid Replacement Therapy (ORT) when talking about pregnancy so it's clear we mean only methadone or buprenorphine.

While ORT itself can't prevent all potential problems of pregnancy, a comprehensive ORT program can greatly reduce the possibility of sickness or even death in the mother or child.

If you are not pregnant now but might have sex with someone that could lead to pregnancy, BHG strongly urges you to use some form of birth control. Talk to one of our providers or nurses if you have questions about what form to use. If you decide you would like to become pregnant during your recovery with us, please talk to our providers and nurses first so we can give you the best advice for your individual situation.

What advantages does ORT offer? Heroin and other opioid drug use can cause serious complications during pregnancy, including miscarriage or premature delivery of the unborn child (*also called a fetus*). And children born to addicted mothers also are at greater risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Since the early 1970s, medical experts have recommended ORT for opioid-dependent pregnant women. Because ORT helps reduce the use of illegal opioids and the abuse of other harmful drugs, it offers several proven advantages:

- helps you escape from a drug-seeking lifestyle
- reduces the risks of contracting HIV, hepatitis, and other infections
- prevent erratic blood levels of drugs that put the baby through withdrawal
- improves your nutrition, leading to healthier weight and condition of the newborn
- allows you to prepare for the birth, take baby care classes, and begin homemaking
- reduces medical complications both before and during childbirth

In short, research has clearly shown that ORT (*methadone or buprenorphine*) is safe for pregnant women and offers you a much greater chance for a healthy baby.