

# Why do people use cannabis during pregnancy and lactation?

Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology requires iteration between data collection and analysis, with preliminary insights shaping future sampling and data collection (Charmaz, 2014). This interview guide is the seventh iteration we used, reflecting the final interview guide.

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

*Thank you for agreeing to join me for this interview. Today we will be talking about your experiences with cannabis and how you made the decision about whether or not to use cannabis during pregnancy or when breastfeeding. When we say cannabis, we're interested in your experiences with any cannabis product – such as smoked marijuana, gel caps, oils, edibles, and products you might apply to your skin or hair. Additionally, when we say “breastfeeding” this means that breast milk is the source of nutrition, whether the baby drinks from the breast or a bottle, and whether or not it's supplemented with other types of formula or food.*

*I also want to assure you that your healthcare provider won't have access to any information you share with me today. They won't know that you participated in this interview. This interview is completely confidential and we will not share any of this information with anyone, including Children's Aid Society or any other organization.*

*Do you have any questions before we begin? [Answer any questions] Okay, we'll start now.*

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## Informed Consent Script:

Did you receive and review a copy of the informed consent letter?

Did you have the opportunity to ask questions and were they answered to your satisfaction?

Do you understand that you have the right not to participate and the right to withdraw at any time?

Do you understand that any information you provide will be kept confidential, unless required by law, and that only the study researchers and staff involved in this study, independent ethics committees and inspectors from government regulatory agencies will have direct access to the information you provide?

Interviewer: And finally, do you consent to participating in this recorded interview?

## Interview Questions:

Now we'll process to the interview questions. This study includes people who are currently pregnant as well as those who have been pregnant in the past year. Are you currently pregnant?

- a. If yes, how far along are you? (how many weeks?)
- b. If no, how long ago did you give birth?
  - i. Did you feed your baby breast milk?
  - ii. Are you still breastfeeding? If no, when did you stop?

*Ok thanks, we'll come back to this later- it just helps me to make the rest of the questions relevant to you to understand where you're at right now.*

## Before Pregnancy

1. Let's start out by talking about your experience with cannabis before pregnancy. As mentioned, when I say cannabis, I mean any kind of marijuana or CBD or THC product. It could be smoked, vaped, eaten, or applied to your skin or hair.
  - a. Did you use cannabis before pregnancy?
  - b. What forms of cannabis do you use?
  - c. Were you using cannabis for a specific purpose? [If yes, was this something your doctor recommended? Probe for whether it was discussed with a health care professional regardless of whether it was prescribed]
  - d. [if using therapeutically] Did you think about pursuing a prescription from a doctor or medical authorization form? Why or why not?
  - e. Now, this study focuses on cannabis but we know that often times people might be using other substances. In the three months before your pregnancy did you use any other substances?
    - i. **If needed** Probe: prescribed medications, alcohol, tobacco, opioids, cocaine, methamphetamine, nicotine, ecstasy, LSD, heroin, shrooms, PCP
    - ii. Did you continue using those substances when you were pregnant?

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- iii. If yes, ok, thanks for sharing that. We're mostly interested in cannabis but I know sometimes it's all wrapped up together, so please feel free to make reference to [other substance used] if it feels relevant to you when you're answering the questions.

### During Pregnancy – Decision-making

2. Ok, now I'm going to ask you some questions about your decisions to use cannabis or not during pregnancy and breastfeeding. I want to say right out that I'm not here to judge you, I know there are lots of good reasons to use cannabis during pregnancy and that it can be a really hard choice. *[For those who are no longer pregnant: First I'll ask you about pregnancy and then I'll ask you about breastfeeding]* Can you please describe your own cannabis use during pregnancy?
  - a. What forms of cannabis did you use?
  - b. How often did you use cannabis?
  - c. Why did you use cannabis? What were the benefits of using it?
    - i. Probe: Did you use cannabis for a specific symptom?
    - ii. Was this related to your pregnancy or something that existed before you became pregnant?
  - d. Did you have reasons not to use cannabis?
    - i. [probe: were you worried about effect on baby? What kind of effects were you worried about?]
  - e. Was it a hard decision about whether or not to use cannabis?
    - i. Was it something like you felt you could give up if you needed to?
    - ii. Did you feel like you had something you could substitute?
    - iii. Was it a substitute for something else? Probe about: prescribed medications
  - f. During pregnancy, did you change the amount, or the type of cannabis you used?
    - i. Do some types of cannabis feel safer than others? E.g. we've heard from some women that cannabis tea or hair oils feel safer than smoking.
  - g. *[For those who didn't use cannabis during pregnancy]* Why did you decide to stop?
    - i. Did you substitute anything else for it? Probe about: prescribed medications
    - ii. Did you have a plan for when it would be ok to resume?
  - h. *[For those who are still pregnant]* Do you plan to change your cannabis use after you give birth?
    - i. Probe: planning to breastfeed? Change use while breastfeeding? Is decision about bf influenced by desire to use cannabis?

### During Pregnancy – Risk Mitigation

3. Is there anything you did, or strategies you employed to minimize risks when using cannabis during your pregnancy?
  - a. Was this something you considered prior to becoming pregnant? Did you make plans about changing your cannabis use prior to pregnancy?

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- b. Probe about: Time of day; partner or family member support; dosing; type of product; product source

#### During Pregnancy – Sources of Influence/Stigma

- 4. When had you decided to use cannabis, did anyone else influence that decision?
  - a. [probe health care provider, family, partner]
  - b. Did you find information which influenced this decision?
  - c. What responses have you gotten about your use of cannabis during pregnancy if you told others?
    - i. Probe for: partner; family members; friends; other moms
    - ii. What did you think about those responses [specify to each party/person]? How do you think they perceived you?
    - iii. Are there any aspects of your identity that you think impact the way people respond to your cannabis use? By “identity” I mean your age, race, sexual orientation, disability etc.

#### Breastfeeding – Decision-making

- 5. *[for those who have breastfed]* Ok, so you mentioned earlier that you breastfed for X months. Did you use cannabis during this time?
  - a. What forms of cannabis did you use?
  - b. How often did you use cannabis?
  - c. Why did you use cannabis? What were the benefits of using it?
    - i. Did you use cannabis for a specific symptom?
  - d. Did you have reasons not to use cannabis?
    - i. [probe: were you worried about effect on baby? What kind of effects were you worried about?]
  - e. Was it a hard decision about whether or not to use cannabis?
    - i. Was it something like you felt you could give up if you needed to?
    - ii. Did you feel like you had something you could substitute?
    - iii. Was it a substitute for something else? Probe about: prescribed medications
  - f. During breastfeeding, did you change the amount, or the type of cannabis you used?
    - i. Do some types of cannabis feel safer than others? E.g. we’ve heard from some women that cannabis tea or hair oils feel safer than smoking.
  - g. ***[For those who didn’t use cannabis during breastfeeding]*** If you did not use cannabis during breastfeeding, did you resume using it after breastfeeding?
    - i. And during the time you were breastfeeding, were you using any other substances (including alcohol and tobacco? Prescription medication?) Do you see a difference between using these substances and using cannabis while breastfeeding?

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## Breastfeeding – Risk Mitigation

6. Is there anything you did, or strategies you employed to minimize risks when using cannabis during breastfeeding?
  - a. Was this something you considered prior to breastfeeding? Did you make plans about changing your cannabis use prior to giving birth?
  - b. Probe about: Time of day; partner or family member support; dosing; type of product; product source

## Partner Support

7. Do you have a partner supporting you in this pregnancy?
  - a. Do you talk with them about using cannabis during pregnancy or breastfeeding?
  - b. Do they use cannabis?
  - c. How do they affect your decision to use cannabis?

## Breastfeeding – Sources of Influence/Stigma

8. What responses have you gotten about your use of cannabis during breastfeeding if you told others?
  - a. Probe for: partner; family members; friends; other moms
  - b. How did that make you feel?
  - c. Are there any aspects of your identity that you think impact the way people respond to your cannabis use? By “identity” I mean your age, race, sexual orientation, disability etc.

## Information Searching & Use

9. When you were deciding whether to use cannabis during pregnancy [and breastfeeding], what information was influential in that decision?
  - a. What kind of information did you look for?
  - b. Was there any information you looked for and didn't find?
  - c. Did you find enough information? Were you comfortable with it?
  - d. Was the information you found clear?
    - i. Did it help you make your decision?
    - ii. How did you decide what information to trust?
  - e. Did you receive any information from your healthcare provider?
    - i. What information would you have liked to receive from them?

## Healthcare Providers

10. Have you ever spoken with your healthcare provider about using cannabis during pregnancy/breastfeeding?
  - a. If yes, can you please describe that experience?
    - i. Which healthcare provider(s) did this include? (e.g. family physician, obstetrician, midwife, nurse, nurse practitioner, physician assistant?)
    - ii. Did they start this conversation or did you?
    - iii. Did they provide any information?

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- iv. Did they talk about the risks of cannabis use? What were those risks?
- v. Did they talk about benefits of cannabis use? What were those benefits?
- vi. What was your take-home message at the end of that conversation?
- b. If no, do you think your healthcare provider should have spoken with you?
  - i. Would you feel comfortable initiating that conversation? Why or why not?
  - ii. What kind of information would be useful to you, coming from a healthcare provider?
- c. Did you feel comfortable telling your health care provider that you were thinking of using cannabis?
  - i. What were you afraid might happen if you disclosed using cannabis use?
- d. In an ideal world, how would you like your health care provider to help you make this decision?

### Future & Other Questions

- 11. If you are pregnant again in the future, would you do anything differently?
- 12. Is there anything we didn't ask that you feel would be helpful for us to know?

### Demographic Questions

*Thank you for sharing your experiences and perspectives with me. Before we finish, I just want to ask you some demographic questions:*

- 1. What kind of healthcare provider do you have? [Probe: family physician, obstetrician, midwife, shared care or other]
- 2. How old are you?
- 3. What gender do you identify with?
- 4. What is your race or ethnicity?
- 5. Do you live in urban, suburban, or rural area?
- 6. What province is that?
- 7. Who do you live with? Do you consider them a source of support for your parenting?
- 8. What level of school have you completed? [affirm category below]
  - a. Some high school OR completed high school
  - b. Some college or trade school
  - c. Completed college or trade school
  - d. Some university
  - e. Completed university
  - f. Some postgrad or professional studies
  - g. Completed postgrad or professional studies
- 9. Are you currently working?
  - a. Full time or part time?
  - b. What is your job?
  - c. If not working FT, are you receiving income assistance from the government?
- 10. Do you have other children?

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11. We know that many pregnancies are not planned, but that doesn't mean they're not wanted. On the spectrum of very carefully planned to a complete surprise, where was this pregnancy?

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