



Opioid Use Among Pregnant and Postpartum People

People who are pregnant, birthing, or recently postpartum represent a demographic uniquely vulnerable to harms and stigma related to opioid use ([SAMSHA](#)). While it is difficult to estimate the proportion of this population impacted, prenatal substance exposure rates across the U.S. range from 9.9 to 88.1 per 1,000 births. The estimated rate in Washington is 34.9 per 1,000 births ([Matern. Child Health J. 2023](#)).

Effective medications for treatment of opioid use disorder, such as buprenorphine and methadone, are safe to use while pregnant or breastfeeding ([WA DOH](#)). Only 50-60% of pregnant people with opioid use disorder take any medication ([SAMSHA](#)).

The following resources highlight Washington State clinic locations providing medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) for pregnant individuals in Washington:

- [Substance Using Pregnant People \(SUPP\) Program](#)
- [Washington Recovery Helpline](#)

Pregnancy can provide motivation and opportunity for intervention and treatment of opioid use disorder alongside prenatal care. However, systemic barriers exist for this population when seeking care.

Barriers to opioid use disorder (OUD) treatment for pregnant people:

- ✦ Limited availability of prescribers and clinics that treat pregnant patients
- ✦ Lack of education and training of opioid use disorder treatment for pregnant patients
- ✦ Treatment may not be covered by insurance
- ✦ Fear of child welfare involvement or legal concerns
- ✦ Community and provider stigma toward pregnant people who use drugs during gestation

When taken as prescribed, buprenorphine and methadone are safe and effective for treating opioid use disorder during pregnancy.

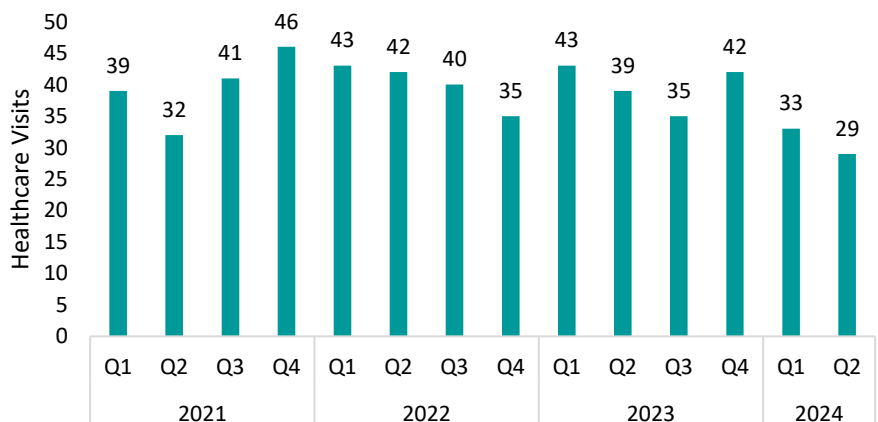
Pregnant people who are already taking medication for opioid use disorder should not stop taking it during pregnancy ([SAMSHA](#)).

Maternal opioid use during pregnancy can lead to neonatal opioid withdrawal and can cause great distress and danger to the newborn.

In Snohomish County, an estimated quarterly average of 38 babies are born with neonatal withdrawal symptoms. Quarterly averages have been lower so far in 2024 ([ESSENCE](#)).

With adequate resources, pregnancy and the postpartum period can be a time of change and a meaningful opportunity for someone with opioid use disorder to engage in care.

Healthcare Visits with Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Symptoms Among Infants Under One Week Old in Snohomish County, by Quarter



ESSENCE data; query included neonatal withdrawal symptoms and maternal drug use

For more information about the impacts of substance use and misuse in Snohomish County, visit snohomishoverdoseprevention.com