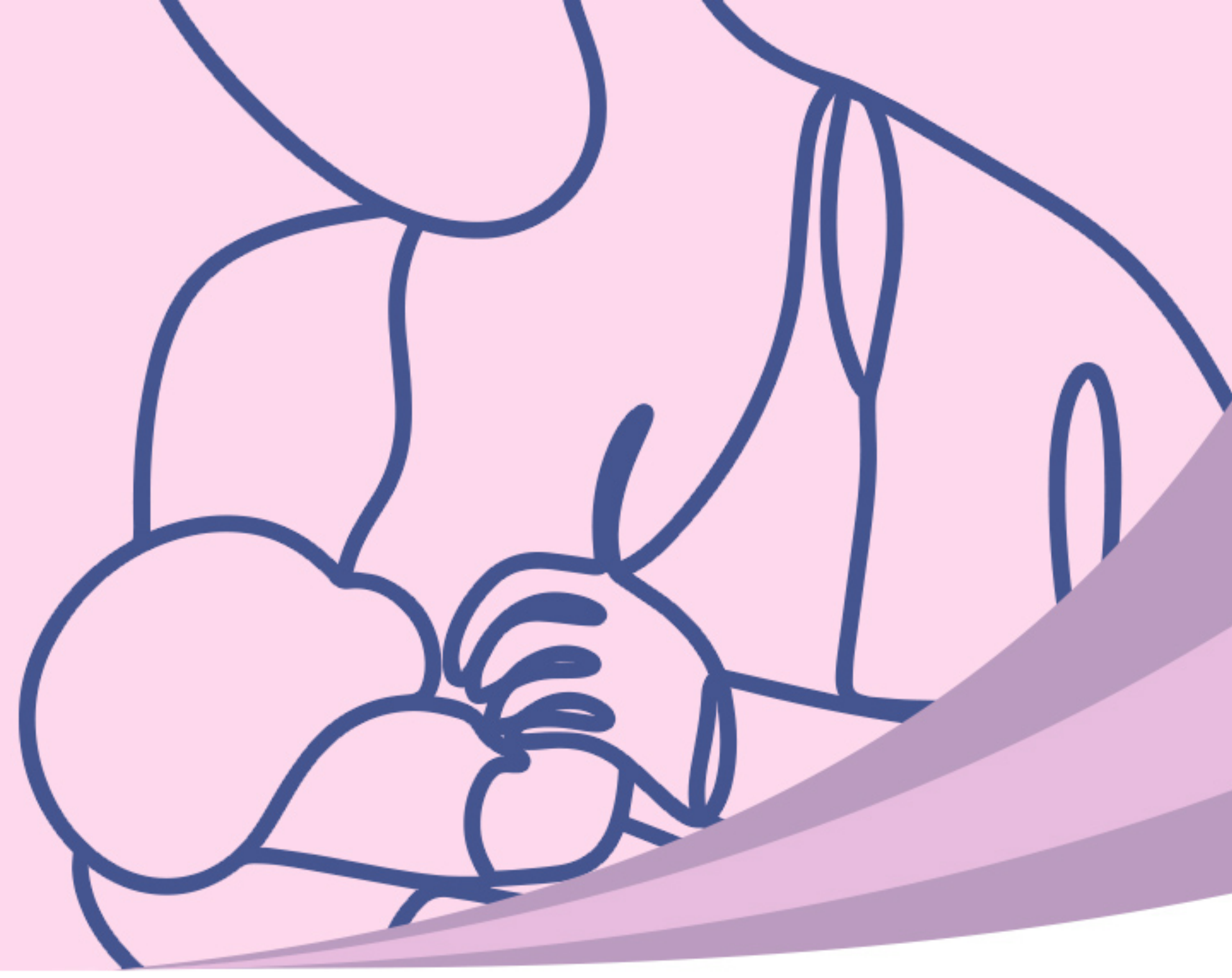


Marijuana and Breastfeeding

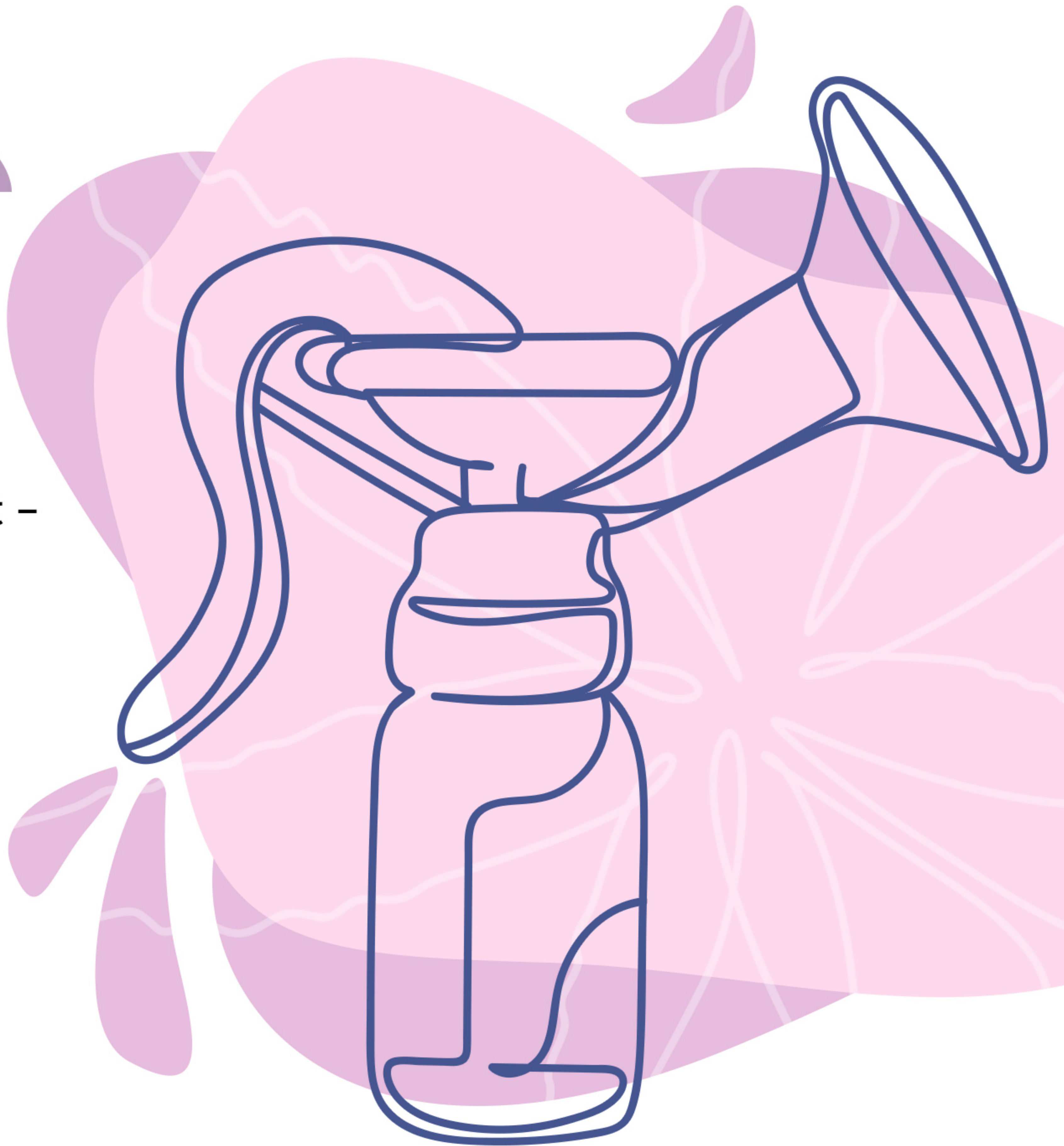


Breastfeeding provides essential nutrients to a developing infant, helps protect babies from diseases, and enhances bonding between mother and child. No marijuana or CBD products are safe for use while breastfeeding.¹

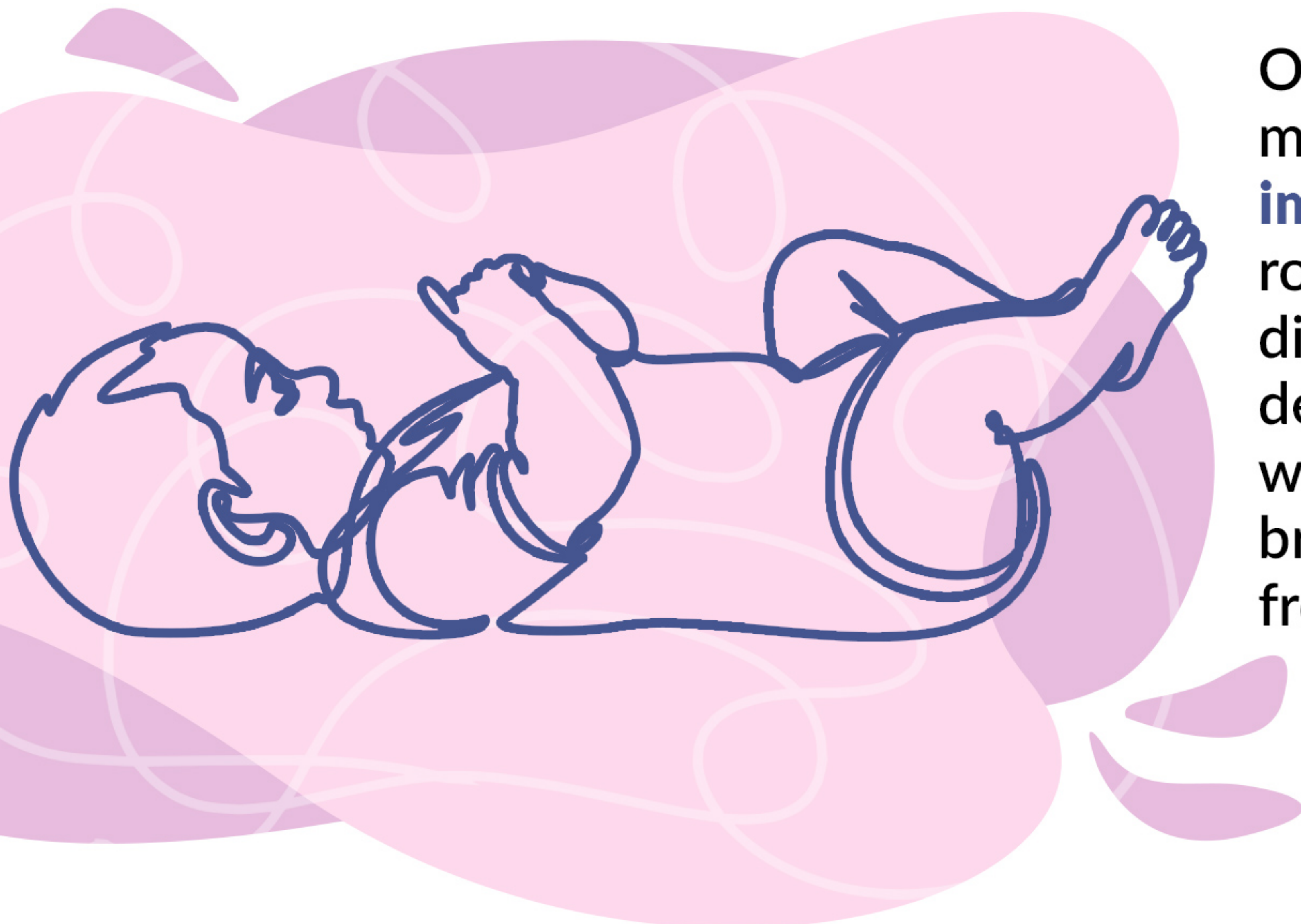
The Risks of THC

Marijuana, also known as cannabis, contains hundreds of different substances, including THC, the psychoactive ingredient that gets users high.

- THC has a strong attraction for fat, and so will travel to areas in the body with high fat content – like breastmilk – and will remain stored there for long periods of time, from days to weeks after last use.¹
- “Pumping and dumping” will not remove THC from breastmilk.²
- THC can accumulate in breastmilk in levels 7-8 times higher than in the mother’s blood (which alcohol primarily affects).²
- Research has shown that infants have tested positive for marijuana weeks after consuming THC in breastmilk.³



Because a baby's brain and body are mostly composed of fat, it's important to know that THC, being drawn to fat, transfers from breastmilk to the baby's brain. When this happens, THC binds to brain receptors which can disrupt a baby's growth and interferes with brain development.² Studies have shown that infants exposed to marijuana through breastmilk experience delayed motor development, increased tremors, poor sucking, slow weight gain, and poor feeding.³



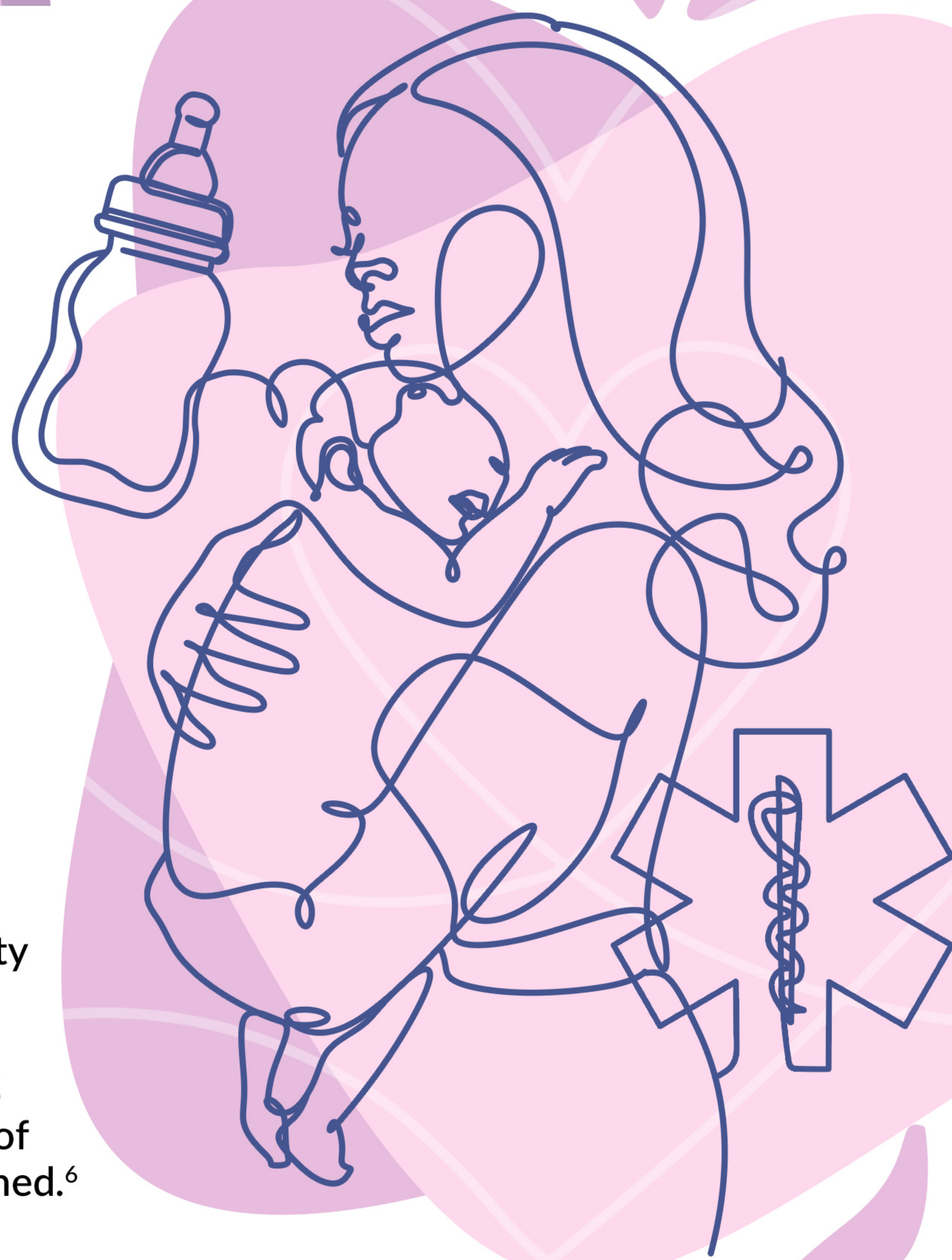
One important immune factor that gets passed from mother to baby through breastfeeding is **secretory immunoglobulin A (S IgA)**, which plays an important role in infant gut health and protects babies from diseases. Research has found that S IgA levels are decreased in the milk of mothers who use marijuana, which indicates that babies exposed to THC in breastmilk may not be as protected as other babies from illnesses.⁴

Additional Dangers

Marijuana can also negatively impact breastmilk supply. Research has found that marijuana may reduce the hormone prolactin, which can reduce a mother's milk supply which can also impact an infant's growth and development.³ Women who use marijuana typically wean earlier than women who do not use marijuana.⁵

Other components of the marijuana plant, such as CBD, should be avoided as CBD can also pass into breastmilk. Research on CBD products has found that such products may contain THC and other harmful chemicals including pesticides, bacteria, heavy metals, and other contaminants. It is important to know that CBD products are falsely advertised as treatments for a variety of conditions which have not been proven by scientific research and are not FDA approved.²

Currently, many long-term effects from marijuana on breastfeeding infants are unknown; the majority of studies that have been done on this topic were done when the general potency of marijuana was weaker. Products available today are over 1,000% stronger than observed in the 1980s. The effects of high potency THC products are yet to be determined.⁶



Always Ask a Doctor

Legal does not mean safe. Just as you would be cautious with prescription or over-the-counter medications during breastfeeding, avoid using marijuana or marijuana derived products during this period. If you are using marijuana as a medicine, talk with your healthcare provider about alternatives for you and your baby's health.^{1,6}

Produced by DFAF with contribution by Mirine Richey, MPH, IBCLC

<https://www.marijuanaknowthetruth.org/marijuana-and-pregnancy>

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