

Other Drugs

Pre-Reading Discussion: If a drug such as alcohol or tobacco is legal, does that mean it is safe to use? When can other drugs be dangerous to one's health?

This passage is about a woman named Toni. Her doctor gives her the news that she is pregnant. She also gives her some important medical advice. Find out what that advice is.

Toni was in the doctor's office. The lab had just called. Her pregnancy test was positive.

"Well, Toni," said Dr. Rashid, "this is a big day. Congratulations. You are pregnant." She gave Toni a hug.

Toni was very happy, but she felt scared too. The news was a bit of a shock.

"Wow!" she said. "What happens next?"

"Well, there is a lot you can do to have a safe pregnancy and a healthy baby. You start by taking good care of yourself. While you are pregnant, almost everything you put in your body can affect the developing baby. This is true even later, after the baby is born, when you are nursing."

"So, I should watch what I eat?" asked Toni.

"Yes. Getting the right nutrition is very important. Also, did you know that if you smoke, drink alcohol, or take drugs, it can harm you and your baby?"

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“I have heard that,” said Toni. “I do smoke, but not a lot, - half a pack a day maybe. I don’t drink that much. At parties my friends and I get a little drunk. We smoke pot, but we don’t do any ‘bad’ drugs.”

“I understand,” said Dr. Rashid. She smiled at Toni. “My advice is to quit smoking, drinking alcohol, and taking other drugs. Even if you only do these things once in a while, you risk causing serious harm to your baby.”

“What kind of harm?” asked Toni.

“Well, smoking during pregnancy can limit the amount of nutrition the baby receives. Babies born to moms who smoke are often very underweight. That is not good. These babies are not as healthy. They have a higher rate of learning problems and behavior problems.”

“What about alcohol?” asked Toni.

“Alcohol and many other drugs can increase the risk of birth defects. They can affect a baby’s growth. They can affect brain development. These are not risks you want to take,” said Dr. Rashid.

“I want a normal, healthy baby,” said Toni.

“Of course you do! Good! Then you will be motivated to make some lifestyle changes. There are people who can help you to do that. A lot of people need some extra support to quit these things.”

“I think I might need some help,” said Toni. “I’ve tried to quit smoking and drinking before, but it was too hard.”

“I understand,” said Dr. Rashid. “Most people have to try more than one time to quit. But now you have the best reason ever to do it.”

Toni agreed.

“Let’s make an appointment for you with our OB-GYN Clinic,” said Dr. Rashid. The doctors and nurses there will give you information about staying healthy during pregnancy. And they have a support group that you can join. You’ll meet other women who are making new, healthier choices. I think you’ll be glad you did.”

“You were right, Dr. Rashid,” said Toni. “Today really IS a big day.”

Questions for Discussion:

Can you relate to Toni's experience?

Why is it hard for people to quit smoking, drinking, and doing other drugs?

Why did the doctor advise Toni to quit smoking, drinking, and doing other drugs while she is pregnant? And while she is nursing?