

ELIMINATE BIAS

LANGUAGE MATTERS

FOR PREGNANT WOMEN & BABIES



INSTEAD OF

Drug baby

TRY SAYING

Newborn exposed to a substance

Why?

Newborns are not defined by substance exposure. Language labeling newborns as “drug babies” reinforces harmful stereotypes. Person-first language should be used.

Pregnant women with substance use disorder are often stigmatized, preventing them from seeking medical care, engaging in services, and being open about substance use. Using the right language matters.



INSTEAD OF

Born addicted

TRY SAYING

Newborn with drug withdrawal

Why?

Addiction* occurs when people use substances despite negative consequences. Newborns cannot be addicted, but they can experience withdrawal after being exposed to opioids and other substances.



INSTEAD OF

Addict, user, abuser, or junkie

TRY SAYING

Person with a substance use disorder

Why?

Person-first language suggests that someone has a health condition, rather than defining them by that condition.



Visit nida.nih.gov for more information, or scan the QR code to the left.



*Addiction is a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's life experiences. People with addiction use substances or engage in behaviors that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences. Definition from the American Society of Addiction Medicine.