

Smoking and Pregnancy

In the United States, approximately 11.4% of all women who are pregnant smoke. Women who smoke often have a more difficult time becoming pregnant. Pregnant women who quit smoking when they find out that they are pregnant (or at least in the first three months of their pregnancy) increase their chances of having a healthy full-size baby. Quitting, especially during pregnancy can be

challenging, so stopping before you get pregnant is very important. Quitting may not be easy but there are things you can do to help you quit; talk to your health care provider, join a local cessation program or call a smokers' quitline. These are all helpful ways to support your efforts in quitting.

How does smoking during pregnancy impact my baby and me?

Smoking cigarettes during pregnancy is considered the number one cause of harmful results for babies. During pregnancy, mothers provide oxygen and nourishment to their babies. They can also pass on unhealthy chemicals. For example, when pregnant women smoke, they pass on the 7,000 toxic and cancer-causing chemicals contained in cigarettes to their unborn child. Babies born to mothers who smoke are often born prematurely, smaller, and less healthy than other infants whose mothers do not smoke. Underweight, unhealthy babies are sicker and are more likely to die in infancy.

Pregnant women who smoke are more likely to miscarry, or experience conditions such as *abruptio placentae* (the placenta separates from the lining of the uterus) and *placenta*



previa (the placenta grows in the lowest part of the uterus and covers the opening of the uterus making delivery difficult). These conditions can lead to severe bleeding, shock and sometimes death for the mother and infant.

Babies born to mothers who smoke are more likely to die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Babies of smoking mothers also have lower lung function at birth and later in life, and more often have asthma and other lung diseases than babies born to non-smoking mothers. These babies often have more deformities, lung diseases, and middle ear infections when born to mothers who smoke. In addition, these children may have more learning disorders and behavior problems, and are more likely to start smoking when they get older.

What are some tips to help me quit smoking?

Commit yourself to quitting smoking for your health as well as the health of your baby. Positively decide that you want to quit! Develop a plan to stop. This plan should include ways to make it easier for you quit. For example:

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- Make a list of reasons for and benefits of quitting.
- Set a quit date within the next two weeks.
- Identify barriers to your quitting and think of how you will overcome those barriers.
- Make a list of people who will support you in your efforts. Encourage those around you to quit or not smoke near you.

Remove reminders of smoking that might make you relapse. Start by cleaning out your car and home. Try to remove the smell of smoke as much as possible. Discard any remaining cigarettes, ashtrays, lighters, and any other items that remind you of smoking. Break the connection between your smoking and habits you associate with smoking. Try to avoid places where you always smoke. Go to smoke-free areas, such as the library, movies, etc.

Distraction helps during periods of craving or to avoid reminding you of smoking. The following strategies have helped others quit and stay quit:

- Take a walk after meals.
- Keep your hands and mind busy. Find a new hobby.
- Exercise according to your health provider's advice.
- Relax with a shower, back, foot or hand massage, or nap.
- Drink plenty of fluids.

Talk to your health care provider to see if they recommend medications to help you quit smoking.

There are local help centers that you can call. Websites are available to help you quit smoking. These include:

- Your local smoking cessation program by visiting <http://www.quitnet.com/library/programs/>
- Call 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669) for telephone counseling and information about quitting in your state

Most importantly, don't give up! Keep trying. If you have a relapse and begin smoking again, start over. Learn from the experience and try again.

Authors: Tobacco Action Committee of the American Thoracic Society. Patricia Folan, RN, DNP, Andrea Spatarella, FNP-BC, DNP

Reviewer: Suzanne C Lareau RN, MS

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