

Smoking During Pregnancy

Understand its Risks



Not only is smoking harmful to pregnant women, it's also harmful to the baby. However, it is not too late for pregnant women to quit! Here are some answers to many common questions about smoking during pregnancy.

How does smoking during pregnancy affect the baby?

During pregnancy, the growing baby receives its nutrients through the mother. If mom smokes, then the baby will also be exposed to nicotine, an addictive drug, as well as, chemicals known to cause cancer.

How is smoking harmful during pregnancy?

Smoking during pregnancy exposes a baby to dangerous chemicals like nicotine and carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide lowers the baby's supply of oxygen while nicotine increases the baby's heart rate². Women who smoke during pregnancy are more likely to experience¹:

- Loss of pregnancy
- Vaginal bleeding
- Pre-term labor
- Premature birth
- Complications with the placenta

Babies born to women who smoke during pregnancy are more likely to be born¹:

- Prematurely
- With an increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- With birth defects
- At a low birth weight
- With an increased risk of asthma and other respiratory infections

What is secondhand smoke?

Secondhand smoke can be described as the smoke from the burning end of a cigarette, cigar, or pipe as well as breathing in the smoke exhaled by a smoker. Secondhand smoke contains over 7,000 chemicals, 70 of which are known to cause cancer³. Pregnant women exposed to secondhand smoke have an increased risk of pregnancy loss².

Babies exposed to secondhand smoke²:

- May experience slow lung growth
- Are at an increased risk for colic
- Are more likely to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Are at a higher risk for asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia, and ear infections

What is thirdhand smoke?



Thirdhand smoke is nicotine and other chemicals left on indoor surfaces from smoking. Thirdhand smoke clings to hair, skin, clothes, furniture, curtains, walls, bedding, carpets, dust, vehicles, and other surfaces long after you

stop smoking. Second hand and thirdhand smoke still gets into the air duct system and spreads to other rooms of the house even if there is a designated smoking room. Infants, children, and nonsmoking adults may be at risk for tobacco-related health problems when they are exposed to thirdhand smoke.

Can women safely quit smoking during pregnancy?

Absolutely! Talk to a doctor for advice on how to safely quit during a pregnancy. While quitting at any time during pregnancy is beneficial, women should try to quit in the first four months of pregnancy to reduce the risk of health complications for the baby². Quitting smoking is the best way to have a safe pregnancy and healthy baby. Switching to “light”/“mild” cigarettes or cutting down on the number of cigarettes pregnant women smoke are not safer choices².

By quitting the mother will have:

- Cleaner teeth
- Fresher breath
- Fewer wrinkles
- Better sense of smell and taste
- More energy
- More money for your baby

Quit Tips

- 1. Write down reasons for quitting.**
Look at this list or ultrasound picture when there is an urge to smoke.
- 2. Set a quit date.**
On this day throw away cigarettes, cigars, lighters, ashtrays, etc.
- 3. Buy a reward.**
Buy something special with money normally spent on cigarettes.
- 4. Drink lots of water.**
- 5. Keep hands busy.**
Try using stress balls, rubber bands or get ready for baby.
- 6. Avoid situations that may trigger the urge to smoke.**
- 7. Talk to friends and family for support!**

Quit Now Virginia

Tobacco User Quitline

Call 1-800-QUITNOW

(1-800-784-8669)

QuitNow.net/Virginia

¹ www.marchofdimes.com/pregnancy/print/smoking-during-pregnancy.html

² www.mayoclinic.com/health/smoking-and-pregnacy/MY01924

³ www.lung.org

Adapted from the Iowa Department of Public Health, Division of Tobacco Use Prevention and Control.