

Women's Healthcare of Illinois

Obstetrics, Gynecology, & Urogynecology

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Pregnancy: Smoking

Pregnancy is a great time for you to quit smoking. You will feel better and have more energy to go through your pregnancy. You will also reduce your risks of future health problems such as heart disease, cancer and other lung problems. The benefits are great, but the process is hard, especially with the added stress of pregnancy. Although this may be a very tough journey, there are resources available to help you break the habit.

When you smoke... so does your baby. When you smoke you inhale poisons such as nicotine and carbon monoxide. These poisons get into the placenta, which is the tissue that connects you to your baby and sends oxygen and nutrients and eliminates wastes. These poisons keep your baby from getting the proper supply of nutrients and oxygen that he or she needs to grow.



Smoking during pregnancy can cause low-birth weight, preterm delivery, and infant death. Smoking during pregnancy is estimated to account for 20 to 30 percent of low-birth weight babies, up to 14 percent of preterm deliveries, and about 10 percent of all infant deaths according to American Lung Association.

Second-hand smoke CAN cause problems for your baby. According to the American Lung Association, new studies have shown that if a woman is around second-hand smoke during pregnancy, there are added risks. You have a greater chance of having a baby that weighs too little and may have health problems.

There can be long term health risks for your baby. Smoking during pregnancy can cause your baby to have more colds, lung problems, learning disabilities, and physical growth problems. If a mother continues to smoke *after* the baby is born, the baby may get more colds, coughs, and middle-ear infections. Babies have very small lungs, and smoke from cigarettes makes it harder for them to breathe. This can cause the baby to get bronchitis and pneumonia.

Nicotine replacement therapy such as the patch can still affect your baby. Before using any nicotine replacement or cessation aids, you should discuss it with your health care provider. You and your provider can discuss what is more beneficial for you and your baby



Your Plan to Quit:

We understand that smoking is hard to quit, but we have faith that you can do it! If you are thinking about quitting, be prepared and have a plan.

1. Make a list of all the reasons and benefits of quitting.

Some benefits for your baby:

- Lowers the risk of your baby being born underweight or too early
- Increases the amount of nutrients and oxygen that your baby will receive
- Lowers the risk of your baby having health problems
- Increases the chances that your baby will go home with you from the hospital

Some benefits for you:

- Lowers the risk of future health problems such as heart disease, cancer, and lung problems
- Gives you more energy to go through your pregnancy
- Saves you money that you can spend on baby items

2. Change your daily habits. Instead of smoking after a meal, start a new tradition like going for a walk or reading your favorite pregnancy book. Instead of smoking when you read the newspaper, start drinking a milk shake or eating a small snack.

3. Have a strong support system. Trying to quit smoking is hard, and having a friend or family member to call when you are on the verge of taking a smoke can really help make a difference. It is also helpful if you are around others who do not smoke.

4. Ask your health care provider for resources. Your health care provider will be more than happy to help you find a cessation program or cessation aids such as nicotine patches, gum, inhaler or medications. There are some aids that your health care provider can prescribe and some that you may buy over-the-counter. Before taking any of these aids, consult with your provider. These aids still contain nicotine, which can affect your baby's growth and health.

5. Set a quit date! This is the day that you throw away all the cigarettes and ashtrays.

Quick Quit Tips:

- Keep your hands and mouth busy (chew gum, register for your baby shower, start a new craft, suck on hard candy.)
- When you feel an urge to smoke, simply look at the list you wrote of reasons to quit.
- Call your support person when you feel like smoking.
- Do not surround yourself with people who smoke or places that are not smoke free.

Support Numbers to Help You Quit:

- Contact the American Cancer Society's Quitline for free telephone counseling to help you quit. It is easy. A counselor will call you where and when you choose. You'll learn why it's tough to quit and techniques to help you quit successfully. Make a difference in your health and the health of your baby. Call the Quitline today (800) 227-2345.
- Great Start Program of the American Legacy Foundation: (866) 667-8278

