



# Smoking During Pregnancy...

## ...Understanding the Risks

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

### **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 and nicotine increases the baby's heart rate<sup>2</sup>; both are stressful to the baby.

Women who smoke during pregnancy are more likely to have<sup>1</sup>:

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

**How does smoking during pregnancy affect the baby?** During pregnancy the baby receives nutrients through its mother. If the mother smokes, then the baby will also be exposed to nicotine, an addictive drug, and chemicals that have been known to cause cancer.

### **Babies born to women who smoke during pregnancy are more likely to be born<sup>1</sup>:**

- 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 is the smoke from the burning end of a cigarette, pipe or cigar as well as breathing in smoke exhaled by a smoker. Secondhand smoke contains over 7,000 chemicals, 70 which are known to cause cancer<sup>3</sup>. Pregnant women exposed to secondhand smoke have an increased risk of pregnancy loss<sup>2</sup>.

## Babies who are exposed to secondhand smoke<sup>2</sup>:

- 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. If someone goes outside to smoke or smokes in their car, the chemicals from the cigarette are still on their clothes and interior of the car.

For designated smoking rooms, the second and thirdhand smoke still gets into the air duct system and spreads to other rooms of the house. Infants, children and nonsmoking adults may be at risk for tobacco-related health problems when they are exposed to thirdhand smoke.



## Can you safely quit smoking during pregnancy?

Absolutely! Talk to your doctor for advice on how to safely quit during pregnancy. Pregnant women should try to quit in the first four months of their pregnancy to reduce the risk of health complications for their baby<sup>2</sup>

Quitting at any time during pregnancy is beneficial. Quitting smoking is the best way to help you have a healthy pregnancy and healthy baby.

Switching to “light”/“mild” cigarettes or cutting down on the number of cigarettes pregnant women smoke, are not safer choices<sup>2</sup>.

By quitting you 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 your reasons for quitting. **Look at this list or your ultrasound picture when you have an urge to smoke.**
2. Set a quit date. **On this day throw away cigarettes, cigars, lighters, ashtrays, etc.**
3. Reward yourself. **Buy something special with money you would spend on cigarettes. You deserve it!**
4. Drink lots of water.
5. Keep your hands busy. **Try using stress balls, rubber bands or get ready for baby.**
6. Avoid situations that may trigger your urge to smoke.
7. Talk to friends and family for support!

## Resources:



QUITLINE IOWA

1 800 QUIT NOW | 1 800 784 8669



www.tobaccofreepartnership.com  
515-309-9507

<sup>1</sup>[www.marchofdimes.com/pregnancy/print/smoking-during-pregnancy.html](http://www.marchofdimes.com/pregnancy/print/smoking-during-pregnancy.html)

<sup>2</sup>[www.mayoclinic.com/health/smoking-and-pregnacy/MY01924](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/smoking-and-pregnacy/MY01924)

<sup>3</sup>[www.lung.org](http://www.lung.org)