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The dangers of smoking, drinking, and taking drugs

Give Your Baby a Healthy Start

Tips for Pregnant Women and New Mothers

What you do today can stay with your baby forever

Your baby needs your love and care. When you're pregnant, everything that you put into your body goes into your baby's body, too.

You can choose to give your baby a healthy start. What you choose to eat, drink, or take can affect your baby's health. Your decisions matter.

To take care of your baby, take care of yourself.

“I tried to quit before and couldn’t.
When I was pregnant, I asked for help.
Quitting was hard, but I did it. Now I feel better, and I know
I’m being a good mom to my beautiful baby.
Don’t give up—you can do it, too!”

Alcohol, tobacco, and drugs can harm your baby

That’s why today most women don’t smoke, drink, or use drugs while pregnant. They have decided to do everything they can to have a healthy baby.

What about e-cigarettes? Electronic cigarettes also have nicotine and other chemicals that can harm your baby.

Quit Smoking

Tobacco contains harmful chemicals that can hurt your baby. Quit today to give your baby a healthy start.

Smoking while pregnant increases the risk that your baby could:

- Be born too small or too early
- Be stillborn or die during infancy
- Have breathing problems or trouble sleeping
- Have behavioral problems later in life

Secondhand smoke increases a baby's risk of asthma, ear infections, allergies, pneumonia, and SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).

What to do now:

- Quit today—it's never too late. Ask for help; you don't have to do it alone.
- Even if you had trouble quitting before, try again for the sake of your baby.

What to do when the baby comes:

- Keep your baby away from smoke, and don't let anyone else smoke around your baby.
- Breastfeed your baby, and avoid cigarettes. Smoking can lower your milk supply and make it harder for your baby to gain weight.

Take a Break from Alcohol

Beer, wine, wine coolers, and mixed drinks are all harmful to your baby. No amount of alcohol is safe while you are pregnant.

Even if you drank before you knew you were pregnant, stop now for the sake of your baby's health.

Drinking while pregnant can lead to fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, including:

- Birth defects such as a deformed face
- Problems seeing or hearing
- Trouble learning
- Mental and behavioral issues

Drinking while pregnant also increases the risk that your baby could be miscarried, born too early, or stillborn.

What to do now:

- Do not drink while you are pregnant.
- If quitting is hard, ask for help. There are ways to make it easier to stop drinking.

What to do when the baby comes:

- Be very cautious about drinking alcohol, if you choose to drink at all.
- You may consume a single alcoholic drink if your baby's breastfeeding routine is well established - no earlier than at 3 months old. Then wait at least 4 hours after having a drink before breastfeeding. Or express breast milk before drinking to feed your baby later.
- Remember, your baby depends on you. Be responsible. Stay sober.

Right now, your body is your baby's whole world. Any drug you take goes into your baby too.

Stay Off Drugs

Anything that gets you high can harm your baby. Stay away from marijuana, crack, cocaine, heroin, ecstasy, meth, and other street drugs. Abusing (misusing) prescription drugs can also harm your baby. This includes taking your own prescription in a way not intended by your doctor and taking a prescription drug prescribed for someone else.

Using street drugs, and misusing prescription drugs, while pregnant increases the risk that your baby could:

- Be born too small, too early, or stillborn
- Be born addicted to drugs
- Have a birth defect, deformities, or trouble breathing
- Have learning, behavioral, or other health problems throughout life

Get Help. Stopping drugs suddenly without a doctor's help can cause serious withdrawal and health problems for you and your baby.

What to do now:

- Never use drugs. Protect your baby.
- Ask for help if you're using drugs. Even if you had trouble quitting before, try again now for the sake of your baby.
- Only take prescription drugs that your doctor has approved for you during your pregnancy and/or while breastfeeding.

What to do when the baby comes:

- Stay drug-free. Your baby depends on you for love and care.
- Remember drugs pass into your breast milk. A healthy lifestyle means better milk for your baby.

Always ask before taking:

Prescription drugs
(such as pain medicine, sleeping pills, and antidepressants)

Over-the-counter medicines
(such as pain and headache medicine, cough syrup, and allergy pills)

Dietary supplements
(such as herbal products, sleep aids, and energy drinks)

Ask Before Taking Medicines

Ask your doctor before taking any medicines. Medicines you used before you got pregnant may not be safe to take now. Even those sold at a drugstore or grocery store can hurt your baby.

Taking certain medicines while pregnant increases the risk that your baby could:

- Be born too small, too early, or stillborn
- Have high-pitched crying and be hard to comfort
- Have a birth defect, developmental problems, or seizures

Only take medicines your doctor says are safe.

What to do now:

- **Use medicines wisely. Tell your doctor about all medicines or supplements you take to make sure it's safe to keep taking them.**
- **If you get sick, ask your doctor which medicines are safe to take.**

What to do when the baby comes:

- **Check with your doctor before taking medicines while you are breastfeeding. Medicines can get into your baby through your breast milk.**

Having a healthy baby begins today

For your baby, don't smoke, drink, or use drugs. Use medicines wisely.

No one is more important to your baby than you. You can protect your baby from harm.

The choices that you make today can affect your baby's health now and in the days ahead.

Get help to give your baby a healthy start

Quitting is hard. But there are people who can help you. You're not alone. Many other women know what it's like. They can help you quit, give you tips, and support you along the way.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) offers these suggestions:

- Talk to your doctor or WIC clinic for referrals
- For help quitting smoking, call **1-800-QUIT NOW (1-800-784-8669**), or sign up to get stop-smoking text messages (**http://smokefree.gov/smokefreetxt/**)
- For help quitting drinking or drugs, call **1-800-NCA-CALL (1-800-622-2255)**

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