

# Smoking During Pregnancy and Around Infants and Children

It is not healthy for any person to smoke. If you are pregnant and you smoke during your pregnancy, you may hurt your baby as well as yourself.

## What are the dangers of smoking during pregnancy?

When you smoke, your lungs absorb the chemicals in the smoke. The chemicals can be passed to the baby if you smoke when you are pregnant. Some of these chemicals can cause cancer, and others narrow the blood vessels that bring blood to the uterus. This means the baby gets less oxygen and food from the mother's blood. Smoking affects pregnant women and their unborn children. If you smoke while you are pregnant:

- You have a greater risk of losing your baby during pregnancy.
- Your baby may have a low birth weight or be born early.
- Your baby may have trouble breathing at birth.

## What are the dangers of smoking around children after birth?

The smoke from cigarettes, cigars, and pipes is unhealthy for a baby after birth. Infants and children who are exposed to smoke (passive smoking) are more likely to have:

- Asthma
- Learning and behavioral problems
- More colds, lung problems, and ear infections
- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS, or crib death)

## When do I need to quit smoking?

You should quit smoking before you try to get pregnant. If you are already pregnant, you should quit smoking as soon as possible. If you are not able to quit completely, try to cut down to fewer than 5 cigarettes a day. Cutting down or stopping smoking during pregnancy reduces the risks. If you stop smoking early in pregnancy, the risks for your baby are about the same as for women who have not been smokers.

## What can help me quit smoking?

Things that you might try to help you stop smoking are:

- Start an exercise program. As you become more fit, you will not want the nicotine effects in your body. Regular exercise will help keep you from gaining weight. It can also help you feel less depressed if you have mild depression.
- Keep yourself busy. You may find you don't know what to do with your hands. You can read or draw, fix things, make a plastic model, or do a puzzle. You

may also be used to having something in your mouth. You could chew gum or eat carrots or celery.

- Take on new activities. Learn ways to relax and manage stress. Join a group or take a class in areas that interest you such as art, music, or another hobby.
- Join a quit-smoking program. It may be easier for you to quit if you have the support of a group.
- Try hypnosis or acupuncture.
- Ask your healthcare provider about medicines to help you quit smoking that are safe to take during pregnancy. Do not use nicotine replacement products such as nicotine patches or nicotine gum while you are pregnant unless they have been approved by your healthcare provider.
- To successfully quit smoking, it helps to have reasons for quitting that are stronger than the urges to smoke. Keeping yourself and your baby healthy is a great reason to quit. If you cannot stop smoking on your own, get help and counseling.

Developed by RelayHealth.

*This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.*