



## **Education**

### **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 harm your baby as well as yourself.

#### **What are the dangers of smoking during pregnancy?**

Your lungs absorb the chemicals in cigarette smoke. The chemicals in tobacco can hurt the baby and placenta. For example, a powerful, cancer-causing chemical called NNK is transmitted to the baby when the mother smokes. Other chemicals cause the vessels supplying blood to the uterus to become narrower. This means the baby gets less oxygen and food from the blood. As a result, the baby has a greater risk of low birth weight. The baby also has a greater chance of being born too early. Babies who are both underweight and born early have more problems during and after delivery.

If you smoke during pregnancy your baby is at greater risk of problems such as:

- low birth weight
- premature birth
- stillbirth (being born dead).

Smoking during pregnancy may be a cause of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS, or crib death). Also, smoking by the mother during and after pregnancy has been linked to asthma in children. And some studies have shown that these children may have learning and behavioral problems. Also, if you smoke, you are more likely to have a tubal pregnancy (a pregnancy outside the uterus) or miscarriage (loss of the baby).

#### **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 more colds, lung problems, and ear infections.

#### **When do I need to quit smoking?**

If you are planning to become pregnant, 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 help is available for quitting?**

If you cannot stop smoking on your own, get help and counseling to stop smoking. Do not use nicotine replacement products such as nicotine patches or nicotine gum while you are pregnant unless they have been approved by your health care provider.

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

- counseling by a health care provider or therapist trained in helping people quit
  - joining a quit-smoking program
  - hypnosis
  - acupuncture
  - medicines prescribed by your provider that are safe during pregnancy.
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Check with your health insurance company. They might cover some or all of the costs of treatment to stop smoking.

And remember that family members and others should not smoke around you or around children. Even smoke from other people's cigarettes can be harmful.

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