

Smoking & Pregnant Women

Smoking is very dangerous to unborn babies.

These things happen more often to babies whose mothers smoked when they were pregnant:

- Being born too soon or too small
- Crib death (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome or SIDS)
- Colds, other lung problems and ear infections

Maybe you've tried to quit smoking before. Lots of people have to try more than once before they can stick with it. But now that you have a baby coming, this time when you quit, it's going to be the real thing. What you need is an attitude that says "this time I mean it!", and a plan that works for you. It's never too late to quit smoking. Sure it's better if you can stop early in pregnancy, and better yet if you can stop before you get pregnant. But if you didn't, don't blame yourself – just deal with it now.

Here's what happens soon after you quit smoking:

- More nutrition will go to your baby to help it grow.
- Your chances of having a healthy baby will increase, and the baby will be more likely to have a healthy childhood.
- You'll have more energy and feel less stressed.
- You'll breathe easier and be able to keep up with your active, healthy baby.
- Over time, your body will repair itself, and you'll reduce your risk of cancer and other diseases. You'll be around for a long time to be a good mother.

Why Do You Smoke?

Before you can quit, you have to understand why you smoke in the first place. Then you can figure out how to handle your urge to smoke. Here are some reasons:

"It gives me a boost."

Do you feel like smoking gives you extra energy and keeps you going? If so, you need other things to do that give you that boost.

"I need something to do with my hands."

You don't have to be smoking to do something with your hands: cook, sew, write a letter, and munch on a carrot or celery stick.

"I like it."

Some people get a lot of pleasure out of smoking. You can learn to get the same pleasure out of other physical activities that are safe to do while you're pregnant.

"It's part of my routine."

If you're smoking because it's something you always do at certain times, quitting is going to be easier than you think. You need to change your routines.

"I can't quit."

Nicotine is very addictive, and people do get hooked. But like other addictive things, including drugs and alcohol, you can kick the habit when you're ready.

When Do You Smoke?

Figure out what kinds of situations make you light up. These are your smoking triggers. Some of the most common ones are:

- Other people smoking
- Driving
- After eating
- Watching TV
- After sex
- Talking on the phone
- When the kids start crying or yelling
- Feeling stressed at work or at home

Think about what your smoking triggers are, and write them down. Some of them are probably related to being pregnant. It's normal to be worried about giving birth and being a mother. But smoking's not going to help you handle it, and quitting is the best thing you can do for your baby.

What About Gaining Weight?

It's true that most people gain a few pounds when they quit smoking. A woman needs to gain weight during pregnancy, so as long as you stay away from junk foods and sweets, your weight gain is okay. Even if you put on a little more than you need, you can lose it after the baby is born. Regular exercise helps control weight, and walking is an ideal exercise while you're pregnant and after the baby is born.

Your Reasons for Quitting

It's really important to know exactly why you want to quit. The best thing is to make a list of your reasons, so you can look at it when you have the urge to smoke. This list can help you resist. Some common reasons for quitting:

- For my health and my family's health
- To give my baby a healthy start
- To save money
- So I won't smell of cigarettes and won't have yellow teeth
- So I can be in control of my body and my life

How Does Smoking Affect Your Baby's Health?

When you smoke, you breathe in many poisons that get in your blood and keep your baby from getting the food and oxygen it needs to grow. The sooner you quit, the sooner you can stop passing on all these poisons to your baby. Think about this every time you start to light a cigarette. Smokers are more likely to:

- Lose the baby (miscarriage)
- Have the baby too soon
- Have trouble giving birth
- Have a baby that's stillborn or too small
- Have a baby that dies soon after birth
- Have a baby that gets sick a lot

Learning How To Be A Non-smoker

Use what you have learned about why and when you smoke to make changes in your habits that make it easier to quit. You can't avoid all your smoking triggers, but you can resist them, especially if you know what to do when you have the urge to light up.

The Four D's

Use the Four D's any time you crave a cigarette. They are simple to do. And you can use them no matter where you are.

Drink water

Drinking water may distract you, and it flushes the nicotine out of your body.

Delay

Wait a few minutes, and the urge for a smoke may pass.

Deep breathe

Take five deep breaths and relax for a few minutes. You may not want a cigarette as much anymore.

Do something else

- Spend more time with people who don't smoke.
- Do something you enjoy: call a friend, see a movie, rent a video, go window shopping.
- Plan ahead if you're going somewhere with other smokers. Think about how great you'll look without a cigarette.
- Hold a straw if you need something in your hand.
- Chew gum or eat a low-cal snack.
- Exercise! When you're pregnant, the best exercise is walking 15 minutes every day. Start slow, and then get faster.
- Punch a pillow if you're in a bad mood.
- Sew, or knit or crochet if you know how. If you don't, get your mom or a friend to teach you. You can make baby clothes.

Avoid Smoking Situations

Staying away from other people who smoke can be hard, especially if there are smokers in your household. If that's the problem, tell them you're trying to quit because of the baby and ask for their help. See if you can get them not to smoke around you. If they don't cooperate, go somewhere else when they light up. Maybe you can go in your own room, or outside for a walk.

You probably have friends who smoke and you may have to stay away from them for a little while. Explain why, so you don't lose a friend. They might surprise you by telling you they think what you're doing is good. A friend might even decide to quit with you.

Going to parties, bars and other places where people smoke is also a trap. Try doing other things for a few weeks while you're quitting. At work, take a walk instead of a coffee break. Any place that does not allow smoking is a good place for you!

Change Your Thinking

Use positive thinking to get pumped about quitting.

Instead of thinking: I'll never be able to quit.

Think: I can do it if I take it one day at a time. I know it's going to get easier if I just hang in there.

Instead of thinking: I love sitting around with a cigarette and coffee at break time. I can't give it up.

Think: I'll get my break time friends to go for a walk with me. They'll help me if I tell them much I need their support.

Your Quit Day

Pick a day to quit. Then don't make excuses for putting it off. You're as ready as you'll ever be, so go for it.

Get rid of all your cigarettes and everything that goes with them: matches, lighters, ashtrays.

Tell everybody what day you're going to quit, and ask for their help.

Figure out how much money you'll save by not buying cigarettes. Plan to put that money away every day, and use it to give yourself a treat, or to get something for the baby.

Whenever you want a cigarette, use the "Four Ds".

The key to success is planning how to deal with your cravings before they hit.