

Smoking and Your Baby

A Guide for Pregnant Women or Mothers



www.quitwa.com

Quitline 131 848

Yes, you can quit smoking

Quitting smoking provides immediate improvements to your health.

Quitting at any stage during your pregnancy will reduce the harmful effects of smoking on your baby and staying stopped will benefit the well being of your new child during pregnancy.

Smoking and your baby

The umbilical cord is your baby's lifeline. During pregnancy blood flows through this cord to provide your newborn with oxygen and all the nutrients needed for growth. When you smoke you reduce the oxygen made available to your baby. The nicotine in cigarettes increases your baby's heart rate and reduces the flow of blood through the umbilical cord.

Cigarette smoking also contains many other poisons and harmful substances that harm your baby and limit your baby's growth. So remember when you smoke your unborn baby is being exposed to the same poisons as you are. A smoke free pregnancy is best for you and your developing baby. If you keep your home and car smoke free as well; the benefits will be longer lasting for all of the family.



Health effects

Smoking when you are pregnant affects the health of you and your baby.

- **Unhealthy birth weight**

Smoking during pregnancy doubles the risk of having an unhealthy birth weight baby. Unhealthy birth weight is associated with a higher risk of death and disease in infancy and early childhood.

- **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)**

When you smoke during pregnancy, you almost triple your child's risk of death from SIDS. It's important to protect yourself and your baby from being exposed to tobacco smoke.

- **Premature labour**

It increases the risk of premature labour (early birth). Premature babies are susceptible to infection and breathing difficulties because the baby's internal organs are still immature and not properly developed.

- **Miscarriage**

There is an increased risk of having a miscarriage. Stillbirths and newborn deaths are increased by 30 per cent in smoking mothers.

- **Ectopic Pregnancy**

The risk of ectopic pregnancy (where the fertilised egg implants itself outside the uterus) is six times more likely in women who smoke. This is a life threatening condition that, as the pregnancy grows, can cause pain, bleeding and rupture, and can lead in rare cases to death.

- **Asthma**

Smoking during and after pregnancy increases the risk of the child developing respiratory problems such as asthma, croup, bronchitis and pneumonia.

Exposure to second hand smoke

The damage and health effects caused by smoking during pregnancy are compounded following birth due to continued exposure to smoke.

Thirty percent of infants will develop a respiratory condition before the age of two and many of these will develop asthma, if they are exposed to secondhand smoke. Babies and young children have more delicate lungs than adults and are more affected by tobacco smoke and the chemicals it contains.

When exposed to second hand tobacco smoke, they are more likely to develop sensitive airways, making them more susceptible to a number of health problems and hospitalisation.

Infections and diseases of the ear, nose and throat and of the pulmonary system are more frequent and severe among children exposed to second hand smoke.

Associated conditions include:

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
- Bronchitis and pneumonia
- Asthma and allergies
- Chronic middle ear infections
- Cranky or colicky babies
- Difficulty in breast feeding
- Behavioural difficulties

Breastfeeding

Breast milk provides your baby with all the nutrients required for the first six months of life, and the major source of nutrients required for the first year. Breast milk helps protect your baby against infection.

If you smoke and breastfeed, your baby is being exposed to nicotine and poisons in cigarettes which are present in your breast milk.

Your ability to breastfeed is reduced due to smoking. Women who smoke tend to produce less milk and wean their babies earlier than non-smokers.

Preparing your home

One of the best things you can do for children is to make your home smoke-free. This will benefit all members of the household. Place no-smoking stickers around your home and tell family and friends that your home and car are smoke-free. It also helps to tell people not to smoke around you or your children.

Partners can help

Having a partner who is supportive about you giving up smoking will help significantly towards successfully quitting. Ask for support from your partner or if they smoke suggest that you quit together.

The Helping Others Quit booklet is also available by contacting the **Quitline** on **131 848**



Preparing to quit

Before you quit smoking you need to be aware of your reasons for smoking and your reasons for quitting.

Why do you want to quit?

List the reasons why you want to quit

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

When do you usually smoke?

Think about and list the times that you usually smoke eg. After a meal, with a coffee

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

Why do you smoke?

List the reasons why you smoke at these times eg. Boredom, stress, time out

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

Alternatives to smoking

List alternatives to smoking at these times eg. Go for a walk

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

Rewarding your hard work

Lists ways you will reward yourself while you are quitting eg. Buy yourself a gift with the money saved

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

Now that you have prepared yourself to quit, you are ready to set a quit date.

My quit date is:

Dealing with cravings

When the urge to quit strikes, remember the 4Ds.

Remember The 4Ds:

1. **Delay** acting on the urge to smoke. Don't give in.
2. **Deep breathe** take two deep breathes. Breathe in slowly and deeply, then breathe out slowly.
3. **Drink water** sip water slowly. Hold it in your mouth a little longer and savour the taste.
4. **Do something else.** Do something else – take your mind off smoking by doing something else. Try listening to music or calling a friend.

Common myths and misperceptions

“There’s nothing wrong with having a low birthweight baby – it just means a quicker and easier birth”

Having an unhealthy birthweight baby does not make things easier for you or your baby’s birth. In fact a smaller baby is more likely to become stressed during birth, leading to a more complicated delivery. Labour with a small underweight baby is no easier or shorter than labour with an average baby.

“If I stop smoking I’ll put on too much weight”

Some women find that smoking reduces appetite, but at what cost? You will need calories during pregnancy to cope with the increased needs of a growing baby and to maintain your own health. A weight gain of 10-13 kilograms has been found to be desirable for the development of a healthy baby. A balanced, healthy diet consists of eating moderately from a wide variety of foods.

“Smoking relaxes me, and being relaxed is better for my baby”

Smoking may seem to calm you down, however it speeds up your heart rate, increases your blood pressure and depresses your nervous system and these are all symptoms of stress. Every puff you take on a cigarette increases the carbon monoxide in your bloodstream, replacing oxygen in your blood and reducing the amount of oxygen available to your baby. This is not better for your baby.

“I’m already a few months pregnant. What’s the point of stopping now? The damage is done.”

Quitting at any stage of the pregnancy will provide health benefits to both yourself and your baby. Quitting prior to the thirtieth week will result in outcomes similar to those of a non-smoking pregnancy.

“Cutting down during pregnancy is good enough.”

There is no safe level of smoking. Even a few cigarettes a day means many poisons will be in your growing baby’s food supply. However planning to quit as early as you can will mean a healthier pregnancy and a better start to life for your baby.

Further information

For further information on how you or someone you know can quit smoking:

- Call the **Quitline** on **131 848**. This service provides 24 hour professional counselling and access to resources such as the Quit kit.
- The Quit WA website **www.quitwa.com** also offers a range of information and tools to help you quit smoking.
- Talk to your doctor, pharmacist or child health nurse for advice.





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