

Smoking and Pregnancy

Learning that you're going to have a baby can be a time of great joy and a time of anxiety and stress. For many women who smoke, thinking about stopping now may seem extremely difficult and overwhelming.

But what better time to stop than now? According to the Office of the Surgeon General, stopping smoking is probably the most important change women in the United States can make to prevent unhealthy pregnancies. Stopping smoking offers you and your baby the best chance for a healthy start.

How?

- As soon as you stop smoking, your baby gets more oxygen. You will also feel less winded and have more energy.
- Stopping smoking lowers the risk of an early delivery and a low birth weight. Tobacco use during pregnancy slows fetal growth and can cause some babies to have health problems because of low birth weight.
- The risk your child will develop health problems such as asthma is reduced. In fact, you lower the risk of heart and lung diseases for both you and your baby.
- Stopping smoking can lower the chance of miscarriage, stillbirth, and infant death.

Quitting is hard. Giving up something you do everyday isn't easy. Here are some tips to help you stop smoking:

- Make every effort to stop—even if you've tried before. The more times you try to stop, the more likely it will work the next time.
- Create a quit plan. Make a list of all the reasons you want to stop smoking and carry it around with you. Develop ways to deal with wanting to smoke. Set a quit date.
- Tell your doctor or nurse (or pharmacist) you want to stop. They may be able to help you create your quit plan and discuss methods available to help. Let them know how you're doing at each doctor visit.
- Ask for support from a friend or family member. Enroll in a quit-smoking class or program. Let the people who care about you help you stay on track. The more support you have, the more likely you'll be able to stop.
- Reduce your exposure to other smokers. If others in your family smoke, ask them to stop with you or at least avoid smoking around you. Ask the same of your friends who smoke.
- Find out what makes you want to smoke. Plan how you can avoid these times or how you can deal with them without smoking.
- Make your entire home smoke-free. Not smoking in certain rooms is not enough to reduce the risk of secondhand smoke.
- Eat well; talk with your doctor about a healthy diet.

Remember, you have two very good reasons to stop smoking: you and your baby. Give your baby the best chance for a healthy start.