

Pregnancy and Smoking

The best way to avoid putting your baby at risk for birth defects, premature birth, and a myriad of other health-related issues is to quit smoking.

What Effects Does Smoking Have on Your Baby?

Smoking is detrimental to the developing fetus. Cigarette smoke is a dangerous cocktail of tars, ammonia, carbon dioxide, formaldehyde and nicotine, all poisons that endanger the lives of babies. These dangerous substances lead to constricted blood vessels in the mother, greatly reducing the supply of nutrients and oxygen to the baby. Specifically, smoking when pregnant can lead to:

- Miscarriage
- Stillborn births
- Birth defects
- Low birth weight
- Premature birth
- Mental retardation, developmental delay and behavioral problems
- Respiratory problems such as asthma and bronchitis
- Physical growth problems
- A higher number of colds
- Greater risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Smoking After the Baby Is Born

Mothers who smoke and breast-feed directly pass along nicotine to their babies. Smoking also leads to a reduction in the production of milk. Babies who are exposed to secondhand smoke experience greater risk for bronchitis, pneumonia, and croup, as well as ear infections, sinus infections, eye irritation, hoarseness, and loss of appetite. Secondhand smoke increases the risk for cardiovascular disease and lung cancer. Children who grow up in a home where someone smokes have a greater chance of taking up the habit.

Protect Your Baby

The best way to protect your baby is to stop smoking before you become pregnant.

- Don't take your baby to places where people smoke.
- Choose a daycare provider who does not smoke.
- Insist that your home is "smoke-free" and have visitors smoke outside.

If you continue to smoke...

- Smoke outside only.
- Change your clothes before you hold your baby.
- Wash your hands and face before touching your baby.
- Do not let your baby suck on your fingers.
- Designate your car as "smoke free."



For more information on pregnancy and smoking, please see the following websites:
<http://www.webmd.com/baby/guide/smoking-during-pregnancy>
http://www.marchofdimes.com/professionals/19695_1171.asp