

# Quitting Smoking While Pregnant



California  
Smokers'  
Helpline

1-800-NO-BUTTS

## How Smoking While Pregnant Causes Problems for the Baby

Nicotine is a powerful drug. It travels through the body causing your blood vessels to narrow. When you're pregnant, it also passes through the placenta and umbilical cord to narrow the blood vessels that feed the baby. This means less food and oxygen get through, so your baby may not be growing as it should. Besides nicotine, cigarettes have 4,000 other chemicals, like carbon monoxide (car exhaust) and formaldehyde (embalming fluid). These other chemicals can keep the baby from developing normally.



## Risks to the Baby

During pregnancy, babies cannot get rid of nicotine and other drugs very well. As a result, they keep more nicotine in their system. This can cause miscarriage, premature birth, low birth weight, and even death.

Low birth weight means the baby didn't get all it needed to grow, so smaller is not better. Actually, with low birth weight there are more complications during birth and after.

Infants are three times more likely to die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) when their mothers are smokers.

The nicotine taken in during pregnancy can affect brain development. This makes learning, attention, and behavior problems more likely when the child is older. Lung infections and asthma also occur more often.

## What You Can Do

Focus on what you can do now, not the past. Make your home smoke-free today. Remember, every cigarette matters. It is never too late to quit. Even women who quit in the last week of their pregnancy reduce the risks, compared to not quitting at all.

### Quit smoking now and reduce the risk of:

- Low birth weight
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Attention Deficit Disorder
- Lung infections
- Fetal death
- Asthma
- Miscarriage
- Learning disabilities
- Premature birth

*It is never too late to make a fresh start!*

# Planning for Support After Your Baby Is Born

## QUITTING SMOKING WHILE PREGNANT

### Coping strategies

- C**ravings last 3-5 minutes on average. Find healthy distractions.
- O**utside. Get out of the house and get some fresh air. Take walks or go to a place where you can't smoke, like the mall or the movies.
- P**repare for quitting. Cut up healthy snacks to take with you. Have straws, gum, a water bottle and other items on hand.
- I**nfant/baby focused. Think of how quitting helps your baby's health. Make a baby book, hang your ultrasound picture, or fix up the baby's room.
- N**urture yourself. Take a warm (not hot) bubble bath, get a massage, or a manicure. Treat yourself with the money you would have spent on cigarettes.
- G**et involved in new hobbies or classes. Learn to crochet or go to a prenatal class.

### Avoid excess weight gain

- W**ater is important. Try to drink 8-10 glasses per day. It fills you up and can help you fight the urge to smoke.
- E**xercise prevents excess weight gain and makes you more limber and better prepared to give birth.
- I**ncrease your metabolism naturally. Stay active and eat well-balanced meals to give your metabolism a boost.
- G**et to know your body and what you need. Know the difference between hunger pangs and nicotine cravings.
- H**ealthy snacks. Celery and carrot sticks are great substitutes when you crave a cigarette.
- T**rust your body. Accept that gaining some weight is part of a healthy pregnancy.

### Increase your support system

- F**ind a stop smoking buddy to talk with. Your buddy can encourage you in the quitting process and help keep you on track.
- R**emind people you are quitting. Ask them to support you and not offer cigarettes.
- I**nsist on taking care of your emotional needs. Have a list of friends and family that you can contact when you need to.
- E**nvironment. Make your house smoke-free. Ask family and friends to smoke outside.
- N**on-smokers. Find non-smoking friends and watch what they do instead of smoking.
- D**o ask for help. Don't assume others know what you need. If you need help with the kids or a ride to the store, ask somebody.
- S**upport groups. Join a pregnancy or new moms' group or Nicotine Anonymous.