

How to Stop Smoking When Pregnant

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Throughout your life, you may have tried to stop smoking. But now you feel like you have the most important reason of all to stop smoking – the health of your baby. While it's always difficult to quit smoking, the motivation of nurturing your baby may help you kick this habit.

It's important to understand what can happen if you continue smoking while you're pregnant. Knowledge is always the first step toward making a lasting change in your life. When you know the facts, you can make a better choice.

How Smoking Affects Both Mother and Baby

Chances are, you already know that smoking is bad for you. You've heard countless reports about lung cancer, heart disease, and stroke. But with pregnancy, there's a whole new set of risks that can affect you more immediately.

Smoking is the number one cause of problems during pregnancy for the mom-to-be and for the development of babies. While other health conditions may make pregnancy difficult or risky, smoking is by far the most common cause of problems and is totally preventable.

The problem begins with smoking and inhaling thousands of toxins that will travel through your bloodstream and make their way into the body of your developing baby. Some of those chemicals include ammonia, nicotine, carbon monoxide, and cyanide.

The worse of these chemicals are nicotine and carbon monoxide. They actually make it difficult for your baby to get the supply of oxygen that it needs. In the end, this can lead to problems such as stillbirth, low birth weight, and premature birth.

It can also lead to ectopic pregnancy, placental abruption, and placenta previa. These are conditions that can threaten both your health and the health of your baby. You may also have more risk for vaginal bleeding during your pregnancy.

When babies are born to smoking mothers, they tend to be at least a half-pound to a pound smaller than they would have been otherwise. Stunting your baby's growth this early in life can lead to long-term problems.

If your baby is born prematurely, he can have underdeveloped organs. Most commonly, your baby's lungs may not work on his own and he might have to be hooked up to machines to help him breathe.

And as your baby grows, he'll be at higher risk of developing asthma and even have a higher risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Babies with mothers who smoke also have a higher risk of heart defects.

It can be heart breaking to find out that your baby has a lower IQ, learning disorder, or behavior problem – all because you smoked during your pregnancy. But smoking during pregnancy can cause changes in brain development that lead to these complications.

The really good news is that you can prevent many of these problems by quitting smoking during your pregnancy. Ideally, women should stop smoking before they become pregnant.

But even if you find out you're pregnant and are still smoking, you can reduce the risks of disease and complications by stopping as soon as possible. As soon as you stop, your baby will stop getting all of those toxins and will get more oxygen.

Making the Decision to Quit

Now that you know that smoking is detrimental to your baby, you can make the decision to quit. And even though this is obviously the healthiest thing you can do for your baby, it can still be a hard decision to make. In fact, many women never make it.

But you have the ability to make this decision and to be successful so that both you and your baby have a healthier future. It's important to really think about what this decision can mean for your pregnancy and for your child.

Once you've decided to quit, you'll need to decide how you're going to quit. This can look different for every woman. But you need to create a plan for quitting that helps you know the steps to take. This will also help you keep going when it gets hard.

Being pregnant doesn't make smoking any less addictive or any easier to quit. But it does give you a very good reason to stick to your plan. You can choose between a few different methods for quitting smoking based on your own preferences.

Going Cold Turkey

For many people, the easiest method to quit smoking is to just quit cold turkey. That means you just quit smoking and don't turn back. This method is simple, but it's more difficult than you might think.

You can expect to experience some withdrawal symptoms, especially for the first three days. This could include anxiety, stress, and even depression. The good news is that these symptoms will go away after a few weeks and you'll be able to feel better.

This method doesn't cost any money and it doesn't require any special tools. It's also safe for both you and your baby. While those cravings are difficult in the beginning, motivation for a healthy pregnancy can help you overcome them better than for the average person.

This works best for people who smoke less than one pack a day. If you smoke more than that, it may require some assistance or a more gradual decline in smoking. However, even heavy smokers can give the cold turkey method a try.

Stopping Gradually

If you're not ready to go cold turkey, you can work to gradually reduce your cigarette consumption. With the gradual method, you'll cut back until you're completely finished smoking at all.

This method is safe for you, but you should do it as early in your pregnancy as possible. If you're still smoking after 14 weeks of pregnancy you'll be harming your baby. If you're not yet 14 weeks pregnant, make sure you have a goal to be completely done by then.

One method that works for many people is to separate each day's worth of cigarettes into resealable bags. For example, for day one you'll have 20 cigarettes in the bag. For your day two bag, you'll have 18. Your day three bag will have 16 cigarettes and so on.

Separating them out this way ahead of time makes it easier to stick to your decision and helps you be prepared. This method also helps

minimize the withdrawal symptoms you might feel, though you may still feel some, to be honest.

When you get to the last few days and have only one or two more cigarettes, those will be the hardest to let go of. But when you remember your important motivation – the baby - it can help. It's also free.

Medical Assistance for Quitting

For most smokers, it's very possible to stop smoking either cold turkey or through gradual decrease. But if you're a very heavy smoker, it can be hard to quit using these methods because of the withdrawal symptoms.

If you smoke more than a pack a day and you're having trouble quitting, you can try some medical methods for quitting. It's important to involve your doctor in any interventions to monitor the health of both you and your baby.

There are basically two choices for medical assistance: nicotine replacement therapy and antidepressants. These are both methods that many smokers have found helpful. Even though they require you to put more chemicals into your body, they're considered safer than smoking.

Nicotine replacement helps take the edge off of the withdrawal symptoms of quitting. You can either use a patch or chew gum that has this effect. While nicotine isn't good for your baby, it's still better than the accumulation of thousands of toxins from cigarette smoke.

It's important to work with your doctor and make sure you're not getting too much nicotine in your system. Using a 16-hour nicotine patch is probably safer than using patches designed for a 24-hour period of time or using gums that could cause you to take in more nicotine.

Antidepressants have also been shown to be effective with helping to reduce withdrawal. At this time, it's not known if this affects the development of your baby. You'll want to make sure you discuss the possible side effects with your doctor.

When you use these methods, you need to have medical supervision. You also should plan to spend money on the nicotine replacement or medications. These methods aren't free and aren't free from side effects, but they could be better than smoking throughout your pregnancy.

Alternative Medicine for Quitting Smoking

If you don't want to take more drugs to help, get off of the drug of nicotine, you can look into alternative methods for quitting smoking. One of the most popular methods is acupuncture.

Acupuncture is the ancient Chinese practice of using tiny needles to improve energy flow and provide balance for the body. It's been shown to be effective for reducing cravings and helping people stop smoking.

Acupuncture, when performed by someone who is licensed to do it, can be very effective and won't be harmful for you. In fact, many people describe the experience as being pleasant and providing better overall energy and health.

Hypnosis is also gaining popularity as a way to help stave off cigarette cravings. For this process, you'll work with someone licensed to practice this method. Your therapist will work with you on a subconscious level to help reduce withdrawal symptoms and the desire to smoke.

Both of these alternative therapies are safe for you and your baby. While there is a fee associated with these therapies, some insurance companies do cover these treatments. You'll need to check with your insurance provider for more information on this assistance.

Counseling and Coaching

Counseling and wellness coaching are also good options for helping you to stop smoking. You can go see a counselor in office or you can work with a coach long-distance.

The American Cancer Society offers free counseling through their quit line to help you stop smoking. You can also find local support groups and smoking cessation classes with a wide range of costs.

Talk to your doctor about local resources to find out what may be available in your area to help you quit smoking. Just having someone to be accountable to who can give you support is often enough to get you through the difficult period of withdrawal.

Dealing with Cravings

Regardless of your method for quitting smoking, you'll have to deal with cravings. Here are a few ways you can get through those moments and protect the health of your baby as well as your own health:

- Write down a list of reasons you want to quit and keep them with you – you might want to include a sonogram photo of your baby.
- Chew on a straw, sugarless gum, or a coffee stirrer.
- Eat cinnamon candies – the cinnamon doesn't taste good with smoke.
- Call a friend for support.
- Do something with your hands - such as crocheting, knitting, or another hobby.
- Drink a glass of water.
- Take a walk.
- Snack on crunchy vegetables such as carrots or celery.
- Play with playdough or silly putty.
- Change your routine - such as driving to work a different way or waking up at a different time each day.
- Get rid of all cigarettes, lighters, matches, and ashtrays to minimize temptation.

These tips can help you get through difficult moments that might cause you to feel like smoking again. Think about the times that will be the hardest for you and make a plan for dealing with those situations.

Quitting smoking for the duration of your pregnancy is critical for a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby. If you can make this one decision during your pregnancy, you'll be giving your baby a head start for lifelong good health.

And if you quit smoking during your pregnancy, there's no need to pick up the habit again. It's just as important that you don't expose your child to second hand smoke. Make the commitment to quit for your lifetime – not just for the months that you're pregnant.

This will allow you to have a healthy pregnancy and better overall health so that you can have the energy you need to raise a growing child. It's very difficult to quit smoking, but it's a decision that could save your pregnancy, the life of your child - and your own life too.



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