

Smoking and pregnancy

ash
scotland
Taking Action on Smoking and Health

Smoking during pregnancy introduces thousands of harmful chemicals to the baby through the placenta.

Quitting smoking improves the health and wellbeing of both mum and baby, and reduces potential health risks after birth.

Smoking during pregnancy



Smoking in pregnancy increases the risk of miscarriage, premature birth or still birth, as well as abnormal bleeding.

Smoking during pregnancy or after birth increases the chance of sudden unexpected death in infants (SUDI), also known as cot death.

Babies exposed to smoking in the womb have an increased risk of cleft lip or palate at birth, or developing asthma, bacterial meningitis or chest infections.

Quitting during pregnancy



Quitting smoking improves the likelihood that your baby will be born fully developed and at a healthy birth weight.

Quitting smoking will save money which can go towards purchasing essential items or products in preparation for your baby's arrival.

Stopping together with your partner improves the likelihood of a successful quit and also protects your baby from second-hand smoke.

Common myths

“
Cutting down on the amount
I smoke or switching to
e-cigarettes, while I'm
pregnant, is healthy for me
and my baby.”

Any amount of smoking will expose your baby to thousands of harmful chemicals like carbon-monoxide or even some poisons. E-cigarettes are not recommended as they contain toxic compounds and are known to be health-harming products. Additionally, there is no evidence yet about the effects of long-term e-cigarette use. Speak to a stop-smoking advisor for advice about free and safer medicinal nicotine replacement products.

“
My mum smoked when
she was pregnant with me and
I turned out fine.”

While this is fortunate and many children are healthy, it is important to understand that smoking strongly increases the risk of pregnancy complications and life long chronic conditions such as asthma. There are over 5000 chemicals in tobacco and tobacco smoke, 250 of which are toxic and 70 are known to cause cancer.

“
Nicotine Replacement Products
like patches and gum contain
nicotine, so surely that's not
good for the baby either.”

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is a safer form of nicotine delivery and does not contain the thousands of chemicals found in a cigarette or the toxins found in vapes. NRT is not a magic cure, but many people find that it helps minimise their cravings and withdrawal symptoms when quitting. If you have any concerns about these products, speak to a Quit Your Way pharmacy or GP.

“
Smoking relaxes me and relieves
my stress. If I'm stressed then it
will be bad for both me and the
baby.”

Nicotine triggers a surge of a hormone called dopamine, which gives you a feeling of calm and reward. However, dopamine levels soon drop, and you have a withdrawal craving for more nicotine. So, what feels like stress relief is actually relief from your cravings and withdrawal. The constant rise and fall of dopamine actually raises stress levels. Managing stress is important and there are ways of tackling it without the harmful chemicals in tobacco.

“
If smoking increases the risk of
low birth weight then giving
birth will be easier.”

Lower birth weight does not mean that giving birth will be easier or less painful. It does mean there is a potential for baby to develop slower than normal and an increased risk of health complications. It also means that after the birth baby may be weak and require further medical support.

**QUIT
YOUR
WAY**
with our
support

FREE tailored support to quit smoking with NHS Quit Your Way

Talk to your midwife about referring you to your local stop-smoking support service. For self-referral, find all the information you need, including your closest Quit Your Way pharmacy or specialist service at www.quityourway.scot or call the 0800 84 84 84 helpline.