

How Smoking Affects Pregnancy



Health studies show that smoking can affect your heart as well as your lungs. Smoking also raises your risk for certain cancers. While you are pregnant, smoking affects your unborn child. It reduces oxygen and blood flow to your baby. This may cause bleeding problems that can put your pregnancy at risk, or even cause miscarriage or stillbirth.

Smoking includes not only cigarettes but also vaping and hookahs or waterpipes.

How smoking affects your baby

When you smoke during pregnancy, you put your baby's health at risk. Any or all of the problems below are more likely to happen:

- Your baby is more likely to be born too soon (premature birth). When that happens, your baby's lungs and other organs may not be fully formed.
- You may have problems with the placenta. This is the organ that allows nutrients and oxygen to reach your unborn baby.
- Your baby could have a low weight at birth. That does not make delivering the baby easier. In fact, a low-birth-weight baby is at greater risk during labor.
- Your baby could have breathing problems, like asthma or allergies.
- Smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of infantile colic and childhood obesity.
- Recent studies suggest that your baby might run a greater risk for SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).
- Smoking during pregnancy may be linked with childhood behavior problems and slower progress during the early years of school.
- If you smoke and breastfeed, chemicals in the cigarettes can be passed to the baby through your breastmilk. Smoking reduces the amount of milk and fat content in the milk.

How smoking affects you

Smoking has been linked with many serious illnesses. It also increases signs of aging. Among other effects, smoking can:

- Increase your risk for lung cancer, bladder cancer, cervical cancer, and several other cancers
- Raise blood pressure, which increases your risk for heart attack or stroke
- Reduce blood flow, which can slow healing and cause wrinkles

Facing facts

While you're pregnant, you are breathing for both you and your baby. When you smoke, your breathing becomes shallow, and your lungs fill with smoke. Then you and your baby get less air. Cigarettes also fill your body with chemicals, like nicotine and tar. These get passed on to your baby.

- **Carbon monoxide** in cigarette smoke takes the place of oxygen in your blood. It passes to your baby through the bloodstream.

- **Nicotine** raises your blood pressure and heart rate. It reduces blood flow to your arms and legs. It also slows digestion. Nicotine may also reduce blood flow to your baby and cause birth defects.
- **Tar** is what's left after tobacco is smoked. This sticky brown material gums up your lungs, so less oxygen gets into your bloodstream. This affects you and your baby.
- **Thousands of other chemicals** are in smoke, including formaldehyde, arsenic, and lead. Dozens of these chemicals are known to cause cancer.

To learn more

- smokefree.gov/talk-to-an-expert
- women.smokefree.gov
- National Cancer Institute Smoking Quitline: 877-44U-QUIT (877-448-7848)

© 2000-2027 The StayWell Company, LLC. All rights reserved. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your healthcare professional's instructions.
This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your Healthcare professional's instructions. Copyright Krames LLC.