SMOKING AND PREGNANCY
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

SMOKEFREE
QUITTING IS GOOD FOR YOU, YOUR PARTNER AND YOUR BABY

We know that it can be difficult to quit smoking. And with everyone giving you different advice, pregnancy is stressful enough.

But there are many old wives’ tales about smoking during pregnancy. So we thought we should share the facts you simply need to know.

In this booklet you’ll find answers to the most commonly asked questions. Each answer gives you a straightforward summary then tells you a little more about the free support available from the NHS.

You’re up to four times more likely to quit successfully with NHS support. And once you’ve read this booklet, the best thing you can do is get in touch with us.
We’re here to help you, your partner and your baby.
HOW THE CHEMICALS FROM CIGARETTES GET TO YOUR BABY

When you smoke a cigarette, the smoke passes through your lungs into your bloodstream. That blood then moves around your body until it goes through the placenta and umbilical cord – right into your baby’s tiny body.

What makes it worse is that carbon monoxide in cigarettes also restricts the oxygen supply. So your baby gets less of the oxygen it needs to grow, and that can affect their development.

ISN’T THE WOMB LIKE A PROTECTIVE BUBBLE FOR MY BABY?

- No, it isn’t. Your baby shares your bloodstream.
- Cigarettes contain over 4,000 chemicals, including carbon monoxide, nicotine and cyanide. All those chemicals are passed onto your baby every time you smoke.
- Smoking is the main cause of low birthweight in babies, which can lead to illness and cot death.
WHEN I QUIT, ISN’T THE STRESS WORSE FOR MY BABY?

- Smoking is far more damaging to your health and your baby’s health than any stress that comes from quitting.

STOPPING SMOKING CAN ACTUALLY REDUCE YOUR STRESS LEVELS

You’ll feel better and healthier when you quit. And because stopping smoking is the single most important step you can take for your health and your baby’s health, you’ll feel far less stressed in the long run.

You might be feeling stressed from time to time and you might feel that smoking helps you cope. But non-smokers normally have lower stress levels. So stopping smoking while you’re pregnant should bring your stress levels down.

That also means you’re more likely to have a healthy and natural birth, which is much better for you and your baby.

Stopping smoking actually reduces your stress levels.
I DIDN’T KNOW I WAS PREGNANT. IS IT TOO LATE TO STOP SMOKING?

- It’s never too late for you to stop smoking.
- Once you stop smoking, you and your baby will benefit immediately and the oxygen supply will quickly return to normal.
- Smoking during the last four to five months has a particularly harmful effect on your baby’s growth and development.

WHY IT’S NEVER TOO LATE TO STOP SMOKING

The simple fact is, it’s never too late to stop smoking.

Because the carbon monoxide in cigarettes restricts your baby’s oxygen supply, every time you smoke it makes your baby’s tiny heart beat harder. So once you stop smoking, you and your baby will feel the difference immediately.

If you smoke in the last four or five months of pregnancy it’s particularly harmful to your baby’s growth and health. So it’s still worth stopping even if you’ve smoked at the start of your pregnancy.

Every time you smoke it makes your baby’s tiny heart beat harder.
MY MUM SMOKED AND I’M FINE. WHAT’S THE PROBLEM?

- Our knowledge and awareness of the dangers of smoking has increased dramatically over the years.
- Help and support to stop smoking was not available in the same way it is today.

WHY YOU SHOULD MAKE UP YOUR OWN MIND

Every year we learn more about the health risks of smoking in pregnancy. When our mums were pregnant, we knew a lot less about these risks – and smoking was much more common.

Smoking affects babies in different ways. How much a mum smoked, when she smoked during her pregnancy and even how she smoked can change the way that harm is done to her baby.

As every pregnancy is different, it’s important you understand what we now know today. You should use this information to make up your own mind about quitting because it’s going to be your baby. And remember there’s always support to help you quit.
MY PARTNER SMOKES. SHOULD THEY QUIT TOO?

- Yes, they should. Regular exposure to secondhand smoke increases the risk of you having a miscarriage.
- If your partner smokes, you could find it much more difficult to quit successfully yourself.
- The children of smokers are three times more likely to grow up to be smokers themselves.
HOW SECONDHAND SMOKE CAN HARM YOUR BABY

If your partner smokes it not only affects his health, but your health and your baby’s health too.

You are more likely to suffer a miscarriage if your baby is regularly exposed to secondhand smoke during pregnancy.

There’s also a bigger risk of low birthweight, birth defects and problems that could affect your child for much longer – like allergies, asthma, wheezing, attention deficit disorder and even cot death.

We know you’d never want your baby to smoke. But the children of smokers are three times more likely to grow up to be smokers themselves. This means they’ll be three times more likely to develop a serious illness, disability, or die a premature death from smoking. For more information about the free NHS support available to help you stop smoking, please refer to the last page of this leaflet.

Children of smokers are much more likely to grow up to be smokers themselves.
CAN I USE NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (NRT) WHILE I’M PREGNANT?

- Ideally you should try to stop without using nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), but if you’re finding it difficult there are several options which are safe to use in pregnancy.

- Remember, you’re up to four times more likely to stop smoking successfully with NHS support.

HOW NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPY CAN HELP YOU QUIT SUCCESSFULLY

If it’s going to help you quit, using NRT is a much better option than continuing smoking. The nicotine used in NRT is less harmful than the chemicals and poisons in cigarettes.

NRT for pregnant women is available in six forms: patches, gum, an inhalator, nasal spray, lozenges or microtabs. Don’t worry if that sounds complicated. You can get medical advice and guidance on NRT from your midwife, health visitor, GP, pharmacist or a pregnancy stop smoking specialist.

And before using NRT you must have that conversation with an adviser. Only the experts can tell you exactly what medicines you should and shouldn’t use during pregnancy, and they’ll be happy to help.
WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE TO HELP ME QUIT?

Visit the Smokefree website

at [www.nhs.uk/smokefree](http://www.nhs.uk/smokefree) to find out more about smoking and pregnancy and the specialist help available to help you quit for good. You can see five short films that explain the free NHS support options available if you’re pregnant and trying to quit.

NHS Pregnancy Smoking Helpline

Call the NHS Pregnancy Smoking Helpline on [0800 169 9 169](tel:08001699169) for free help, support and advice on stopping smoking in pregnancy.

Our specialist advisers can give you friendly and confidential support. You can also sign up to receive regular phone calls for encouragement at the times you request.

Contact your local NHS Stop Smoking Service

Our trained stop smoking advisers will give you all the support you need when you’re ready to quit. Call [0800 169 9 169](tel:08001699169) to find your nearest service, visit our website at [www.nhs.uk/smokefree](http://www.nhs.uk/smokefree) or speak to your midwife, health visitor, GP or pharmacist.
For more information call the NHS Pregnancy Smoking Helpline

0800 169 9 169

Or visit

www.nhs.uk/smokefree