

FOR CLINICIANS

Myths vs. Facts about Smoking During Pregnancy

MYTH #1: *Smoking hasn't seemed to have any impact on my health. I got pregnant without any difficulty.*

FACT: Although you did not have difficulty this time, in future pregnancies you may have more trouble than nonsmokers getting pregnant. But your chance of getting pregnant goes back to normal when you quit smoking. You also lower your risk for many other health problems.

MYTH #2: *I smoked during my last pregnancy and had a healthy baby, so this baby will be healthy, too.*

FACT: Every pregnancy is different. If you smoked and had a healthy baby in the past, you cannot be certain the next pregnancy and baby also will be healthy.

MYTH #3: *There is nothing wrong with having a small baby.*

FACT: Pregnant smokers are more likely to give birth before their babies have had a chance to develop fully. Smoking during pregnancy increases the chances of having a small or preterm baby (born before term). Preterm babies are more likely than normal weight babies to have serious health problems. Babies of women who smoked during pregnancy may grow more slowly in the womb, which isn't healthy. Babies born early or who grew slowly can have more health problems as newborns, toddlers, or even adults. Some babies who are born early have problems in school.

MYTH #4: *I am three months pregnant. There is no point in stopping smoking now. The damage is done.*

FACT: It's never too late to quit smoking. There are benefits to quitting smoking at any stage of your pregnancy. Quitting smoking will help your baby's growth and development and increase the likelihood of having a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby.

MYTH #5: *Smoking relaxes me, and being relaxed is better for me and my baby.*

FACT: You may feel calmer when you smoke, but smoking actually has the opposite effect on your body. Smoking speeds up your heart rate and increases your blood pressure. Every puff of a cigarette also increases the carbon monoxide in your blood and in your baby's blood, making less oxygen available to your baby.



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MYTH #6: *Quitting smoking during pregnancy will be too stressful on my baby.*

FACT: Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health and your baby's health before and after the baby is born.

MYTH #7: *Smoking fewer cigarettes during pregnancy is good enough.*

FACT: There is no safe level of smoking. Even a few cigarettes a day means harmful chemicals will reach your baby and damage your health. Quitting at any time during pregnancy reduces the harmful effects of smoking on your baby. Your baby will not get the same benefits if you just reduce the number of cigarettes you smoke.

MYTH #8: If I stop smoking, I'll gain too much weight.

FACT: Many women are concerned about gaining weight when they quit smoking but gaining weight is normal and expected as part of a healthy pregnancy. Increasing the number of calories you eat during your pregnancy helps you get the energy, vitamins, and minerals you and your baby needs. Talk to your provider to determine how much weight gain is healthy for you and your baby.

MYTH #9: The only way to quit smoking is cold turkey.

FACT: Cold turkey (quitting smoking abruptly, rather than gradually) is not the only option pregnant women have to help them become and stay smoke-free. Toll-free quit lines, online support communities, mobile apps, and other resources are available to help you take the next step on the path to being smoke-free. If you are pregnant and thinking about quitting smoking, talk to your provider before using any medications or herbal products. Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) and herbal products for smoking cessation have not received FDA approval for use in pregnancy; however, you should discuss the risks/benefits of these options with your provider. Learn more about pregnancy and medicines at womenshealth.gov.

MYTH #10: I smoke, so I should not breastfeed my baby.

FACT: The American Academy of Pediatrics encourages mothers who smoke to quit smoking, but continue to breastfeed their babies even if they don't quit smoking. Breast milk provides your baby with many benefits, including the nutrients he or she needs for healthy growth and development.

The sooner a woman stops smoking, the better. But even if she stops late in pregnancy, it will be beneficial to the woman and her baby.

Ask your midwife or other health care provider about treatment options for smoking cessation.

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