

Child Death Prevention Newsletter

Smoking in Pregnancy

This newsletter is designed to XXXXXXXX

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Protecting your baby from tobacco smoke is one of the best things you can do to give your child a healthy start in life.

Every cigarette you smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals. Cigarettes can restrict the essential oxygen supply to your baby. As a result, their heart has to beat harder every time you smoke.

Benefits of stopping smoking in pregnancy

Stopping smoking will help both you and your baby immediately. When you stop smoking:

- you will reduce the risk of complications in pregnancy and birth
- you are more likely to have a healthier pregnancy and a healthier baby
- you will reduce the risk of [stillbirth](#)
- your baby is less likely to be born too early and have to face the additional breathing, feeding and health problems that often go with being [premature](#)
- your baby is less likely to be born underweight: babies of women who smoke are, on average, 200g (about 8oz) lighter than other babies, which can cause problems during and after labour. For example they are more likely to have a problem keeping warm and are more prone to infection
- you will reduce the risk of cot death, also known as [sudden infant death syndrome](#)

Stopping smoking now will also help your baby later in life. Children whose parents smoke are more likely to suffer from [asthma](#) and other serious illnesses that may need hospital treatment.

The sooner you stop smoking, the better



Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)

You can use NRT during pregnancy if it will help you stop smoking, and you're unable to stop without it. It's not recommended that you take stop smoking tablets such as [Champix](#) or [Zyban](#) during pregnancy.

NRT contains only nicotine and none of the damaging chemicals found in cigarettes, so it is a much better option than continuing to smoke. It helps you by giving you the nicotine you would have had from a cigarette.

You can be prescribed NRT during pregnancy by your GP or an [NHS stop smoking adviser](#). You can also buy it over the counter without a prescription from a pharmacy.

E-cigarettes in pregnancy

E-cigarettes allow you to inhale nicotine through a vapour rather than smoke. Cigarettes deliver nicotine along with thousands of harmful chemicals. By itself, nicotine is relatively harmless. E-cigarettes do not produce tar and carbon monoxide, two of the main toxins in cigarette smoke. Carbon monoxide is particularly harmful to developing babies. The vapour from an e-cigarette does contain some of the potentially harmful chemicals found in cigarette smoke, but at much lower levels.

E-cigarettes are fairly new and there are still some things we don't know. However, [current evidence on e-cigarettes](#) indicates they are much less risky than smoking. If using an e-cigarette helps you to stop smoking, it is much safer for you and your baby than continuing to smoke.

Call NHS Smokefree on 0300 123 1044 for more information, or ask your midwife to refer you.

Liquorice-flavoured nicotine products

Pregnant women are advised to avoid liquorice-flavoured nicotine products. Although there is no known risk with small amounts of liquorice flavouring, the manufacturers advise caution.

Secondhand (passive) smoke harms your baby

If your partner or anyone else who lives with you smokes, their smoke can affect you and the baby both before and after birth. You may also find it more difficult to stop if someone around you smokes.

Secondhand smoke can also reduce the baby's birthweight and increase the risk of cot death. Babies whose parents smoke are more likely to be admitted to hospital for [bronchitis](#) and [pneumonia](#) during their first year.

To find out more about quitting and to get support, your partner can call NHS Smokefree on 0300 123 1044.

