

How Tobacco Affects Babies and Children



Allina Health

When Pregnant People Use Tobacco

What happens to your baby when you use tobacco

- Your baby gets less oxygen and food because nicotine from cigarettes tightens up your blood vessels.
- Your baby gets less oxygen when carbon monoxide, a poisonous gas from cigarettes, gets into your bloodstream. Carbon monoxide can also cause your baby to grow less and reduce your baby's brain weight.
- Some of the harmful gases and poisons from cigarettes get into your baby's bloodstream.

Smoking increases the possibility of:

- miscarriage or stillbirth
- infection in your uterus
- postpartum depression
- high blood pressure caused by the pregnancy
- premature birth (smoking doubles the chance a baby will be born before 37 weeks)
- a low birth weight baby (less than 5 ½ pounds). Small babies are often sick with many health problems. They are more likely to need special care and stay in the hospital longer. Smoking doubles the chance of a low birth weight baby.
- death by sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Low birth weight babies are 40 times more likely to die in the first month than normal weight babies.
- birth defects such as cleft palate or cleft lip
- placenta previa (when the placenta forms at the cervix), which increases your chance of bleeding during pregnancy or needing a Cesarean birth. It also can increase the risk of death for both you and your baby.



- placenta separates from the uterine wall, causing bleeding
- can damage your baby's developing brain
- problems with how well your baby's lungs work and develop.

When Mothers Who Use Tobacco Breastfeed

Your baby gets more nicotine from your breastmilk than you receive from smoking. It is best to not smoke until your child is weaned from breastfeeding.

Dangers of Secondhand Smoke

- Cigarette smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals. More than 70 can cause cancer, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
 - Chemicals in secondhand smoke include carbon monoxide (in car exhaust), butane (used in lighter fluid), ammonia, and toluene (found in paint thinners).
 - Toxic metals in secondhand smoke include arsenic (used in pesticides), lead, chromium (used to make steel) and cadmium (used to make batteries).
- Secondhand smoke can cause cancer, heart disease and respiratory problems later in life.



Important

Quitting tobacco is the **only** way to lower your chances of risks and problems listed above. **Cutting down on the number of cigarettes you smoke will not lower your risks.**

- Secondhand smoke is a mixture of smoke coming from the burning tips of cigarettes, pipes and cigars and smoke exhaled by people who smoke.
- Anyone around secondhand smoke breathes in the chemicals from the tobacco smoke.

No amount of secondhand smoke is safe. The Environmental Protection Agency lists secondhand smoke as a known cause of cancer in people.

- Breathing in cigarette smoke causes a child's airway to get smaller, making it hard to breathe.
- Secondhand smoke can cause:
 - sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
 - ear infections
 - breathing problems (coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath)
 - tooth decay
 - respiratory infections.
- Children who have asthma who are around secondhand smoke have more asthma attacks that are more severe.



Important

The more a child is exposed to secondhand smoke, the more health risks they may have.

■ Secondhand aerosol from vaping is not safe. The aerosol has many of the same residual chemicals as cigarettes including:

- heavy metals such as tin, nickel and chromium
- nicotine
- toxins such as benzene, formaldehyde, lead and toluene.

E-cigarette aerosol contains a higher amount of ultrafine particles that are closer together (concentrated) than in tobacco cigarette smoke.

These tiny particles can go into children's lungs, putting them at a high risk for shortness of breath and lung damage.

Thirdhand Smoke is Real

Thirdhand smoke is the chemical residue left from secondhand smoke. It is what you smell on your clothes, hair, furniture or in the car.

Thirdhand smoke is also the brown film on walls. The residue can cling to surfaces for months. The particles are tiny and can easily get into your lungs when you breathe.

- Chemicals from tobacco smoke cling to the surfaces children explore such as toys and floors.
- Smoking near an open window, blowing smoke out of a room with a fan, using an air filter, or smoking outside does not prevent thirdhand smoke.
- Smoking affects your pets. They are at risk for asthma, cancer and other diseases from secondhand and thirdhand smoke.

How to Protect Your Child(ren)

The only way to protect your family from secondhand smoke is to live in 100 percent smoke-free environments.

- Ask people not to smoke around you and your child(ren).
- Teach your child to stay away from tobacco products and secondhand smoke.
- If someone in your home smokes, only allow smoking outside.
- Wear a jacket or an overshirt when smoking and then take it off when you are done. This reduces thirdhand smoke but it doesn't get rid of it.

E-cigarettes

E-cigarettes are known by many names such as e-cigarettes, vapes and electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS).

- These products use an “e-liquid” found in pre-filled or refillable cartridges, disposables or pods.
- The liquid is heated to create an aerosol that the user breathes in. The heat can turn some of the chemicals into known cancer-causing chemicals.

Important

Chemicals from tobacco smoke cling to the surfaces children explore such as toys and floors. **Opening windows in your home or call does not reduce secondhand smoke.**



- The liquid that goes in the e-cigarettes can contain:
 - **nicotine**
 - Nicotine is the addictive drug in tobacco.
 - **chemical flavorings**
 - Current studies show “flavors” added to e-cigarettes are harmful. They are linked to problems with the heart, lungs and brain. They can be especially harmful in youth and young adults, whose brains and lungs are still developing.
 - **additives such as propylene glycol and vegetable glycerin**
 - When propylene glycol is heated, it turns into formaldehyde, which is a chemical known to cause cancer.
 - When vegetable glycerol is heated, it changes into acrolein, which irritates your airways.
 - **nicotine salt (nic-salt)**
 - Nic-salt is added to e-liquid to reduce the harsh feelings in the user’s throat from the nicotine and other chemicals. Nic-salt makes the e-cigarettes more addictive.

Important

Electronic nicotine delivery systems cause health and safety problems. Dangerous and harmful chemicals have been found in secondhand vape.



- Users can be exposed to a significant amount of nicotine. Different brands can deliver the same amount of nicotine as low as 2 packs of cigarettes and as high as 19 packs of cigarettes, depending on the number of puffs in the device.

How to Quit Tobacco

The best way to protect the health of your family is to quit using tobacco. This can be one of the most important things you do to help the health of you and your child during and after your pregnancy.

It can be difficult to quit during pregnancy. Hormones, stress, fear and anxiety can keep you from reaching your goal. It can also be difficult to quit if your partner uses tobacco as well.

You can quit! Quitting gives you and your baby the best chance of living a healthy life!

Here are a few ways to get support:

- Talk with your health care provider.
 - Ask if nicotine replacement therapy is right for you. Short-acting ways (gum or lozenge) are preferred when you are pregnant.



Important

One of the best things you can do to help you quit is find as much support as possible. The more support you have, the more successful you can be. This is good for you and your baby!

— Ask about the benefits and risks of using nicotine replacement therapy if you are breastfeeding.

- Call or visit Quit Partner at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) or quitpartnermn.com for help quitting.
- Go to allinahealth.org/quit or scan the QR code to learn more about quitting tobacco and resources.
- Mental health conditions can increase your triggers to use tobacco. Quitting tobacco does not make mental health conditions worse. Talk with your primary care provider.
- Talk with your partner or other members of your care circle (family members or friends). If any of them use tobacco, ask them to quit or keep all tobacco use outside.
- Ask for encouragement from members of your care circle when you quit. Kind words, trust and support in doing activities which do not trigger tobacco use can be helpful.



If you feel like you are not getting the right support, you have the right to ask for kind words, trust and encouragement. Tell people what you need. Shaming, blaming and negativity is not the right type of support.



Myth

Quitting smoking will put stress on your baby.

Truth

The risks to your baby if you continue smoking are far greater than if you quit.

- Call your insurance provider. Many companies have tobacco programs that can help you quit.

Staying Quit

It is important to talk with your primary care provider soon after pregnancy. Remind them about your efforts to quit tobacco and ask for their continued support.

You may need to learn new skills in dealing with your emotions and managing stress. Being open to trying new methods can be helpful if you need this. Besides talking with your primary care provider, you may consider seeing a counselor or talking to a wellness coach.

Be a role model

Three out of four people who use tobacco have a parent who uses tobacco. Babies and children spend a lot of time watching their parents. You can be a powerful role model for your child(ren) by not using tobacco.



Important

Help your baby learn positive lifelong habits — like how to deal with stress — by not exposing them to tobacco and tobacco smoke.



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