

Smoking and pregnancy

If you are pregnant and are a smoker it is really important for you to stop smoking for your health and the health of your unborn baby.

How does smoking harm the pregnant mother?

Smoking while pregnant can lead to premature detachment of the placenta with risk of significant post-partum haemorrhage, premature rupture of the membranes and increased risk of complication if a woman develops raised blood pressure also known as pre-eclampsia.

Pregnant women have reduced lung capacity because of the growing uterus, so women who smoke are at higher risk and much more likely to take longer to recover from surgery or events such as respiratory infections.

Pregnant women are at increased risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and associated morbidity/mortality both antenatal and if the birth results in a caesarean section or serious adverse birth events.

How does smoking harm the unborn baby?

Cigarette smoking during pregnancy remains the single most preventable cause of perinatal morbidity and mortality.

The short-term effects of smoking on the foetus:

- increased risk of miscarriage and stillbirth (one in three babies during the first four weeks)
- risk of ectopic pregnancy even with just five cigarettes per day
- more likely to be born prematurely, resulting in higher risk of long term and short term illness and longer stays in hospital, or to have a low birth weight
- two times more likely to have complications such as placenta previa, where the placenta obstructs opening of neck of womb
- babies born to mothers who smoke are twice as likely to die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS or cot death).

The long-term effects of smoking on the baby:

- more likely to have behavioural problems
- more likely to have a learning disability
- respiratory problems
- greater risk of diabetes and cardiac disease later in life
- more likely to become smokers themselves

How can a stop smoking service help a pregnant woman to stop smoking?

A specialist stop smoking advisor can advise you on the appropriate medication you can use to help you to stop smoking. We are non-judgmental and understand that giving up smoking at any time is difficult and that trying to give up whilst pregnant may be particularly hard. We can help you with developing an action plan to all of your triggers to smoking.

How can partners support a pregnant woman to stop smoking when they smoke themselves?

If you are the partner of a pregnant woman and you want to support a pregnant woman to stop smoking you may consider stopping smoking yourself. This is because it is easier to stop smoking when people around you do not smoke.

If you feel that you do not want to stop smoking, you can be supportive by smoking outside the home, away from your partner and prevent the effects of second hand smoke.

After stopping smoking:

After....	Your health will begin to improve after just 20 minutes and you will soon start to notice the benefits of quitting!
20 mins	Your blood pressure and pulse rate will be back to the normal rate of a non-smoker.
24 hours	Carbon monoxide will be gone from your body. Your lungs will start to clear out unwanted mucus and smoking debris.
48 hours	Food will start to taste better and your sense of smell will improve too.
72 hours	Your breathing will become easier and your energy levels will increase.
2-12 weeks	Your circulation will improve, making your skin look better.
3-9 months	Smoker's coughs and breathing problems should improve as your lung function increases by up to 10%.
5 years	Your risk of a heart attack will fall to about half that of a smoker.
10 years	Your risk of lung cancer will fall to half that of a smoker... and your risk of a heart attack should be the same as someone who has never smoked.

Stopping smoking is one of the most important things you can do for your health. You are **four times** more likely to stop with an NHS service (using stop smoking medication and support).

To be referred to your local service or to speak to a specialist advisor please contact the stop smoking service:

Royal Free Hospital: 020 7472 6393 or rf.stopsmoking@nhs.net
Barnet Hospital and Chase Farm Hospital: 020 8216 4175 or RF-TR.bcf-smokefree@nhs.net

Alternatively you can call the national stop smoking service on 030 0123 1044.