Smoking during pregnancy affects you and your baby's health before, during, and after your baby is born. The nicotine (the addictive substance in cigarettes), carbon monoxide, lead, arsenic, and numerous other poisons you inhale from a cigarette are carried through your bloodstream and go directly to your baby. Smoking while pregnant will:

- Lower the amount of oxygen available to you and your growing baby
- Increase your baby's heart rate
- Increase the chances of miscarriage and stillbirth
- Increase the risk that your baby is born prematurely and/or born with low birth weight
- Increase your baby's risk of developing respiratory problems

The more cigarettes you smoke per day, the greater your baby's chances of developing these and other health problems. There is no "safe" level of smoking for your baby's health.

How does second-hand smoke affect me and my baby?

Second-hand smoke (also called passive smoke or environmental tobacco smoke) is the combination of smoke from a burning cigarette and smoke exhaled by a smoker. The smoke that burns off the end of a cigarette or cigar contains more harmful substances (tar, carbon monoxide, nicotine, and others) than the smoke inhaled by the smoker.

If you are regularly exposed to second-hand smoke, you increase your and your baby's risk of developing lung cancer, heart disease, emphysema, allergies, asthma, and other health problems.

Babies exposed to second-hand smoke might also develop reduced lung capacity and are at higher risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

What happens if I keep smoking after my baby is born?

If you continue to smoke after your baby is born, you increase his or her chance of developing certain illnesses and problems, such as:

- Frequent colds
- Bronchitis and pneumonia
- Asthma
- Chronic cough
- Ear infections
- High blood pressure
- Learning and behavior problems later in childhood

Why should I quit smoking?

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S. By quitting you can:

- Prolong your life
- Lower your risk of heart disease
- Lower your risk of developing lung, throat, mouth, pancreatic, and bladder cancer
- Lower your risk of developing breathing problems such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, and emphysema
- Lower your risk of developing allergies
- Raise your energy level
- Improve your appearance (Your skin will wrinkle less and look better, and your fingers and teeth will not be yellow)
- Improve your sense of smell and taste
- Feel healthier overall, with improved self-esteem
- Save a lot of money

How can I quit smoking?

There is no one way to quit smoking that works for everyone, since each person has different smoking habits. Here are some tips:

- Hide your matches, lighters, and ashtrays.
- Take a deep breath and hold it for five to 10 seconds whenever you get the urge to smoke.
- Designate your home a non-smoking area.
- Ask people who smoke not to smoke around you.
- Drink fewer caffeinated beverages. Caffeine might stimulate your urge to smoke. Also avoid alcohol, as it also might increase your urge to smoke and can be harmful to your baby.
- Change your habits connected with smoking. If you smoked while driving or when feeling stressed, try other activities to replace smoking.
- Keep mints or gum (preferably sugarless) on hand for those times when you get the urge to smoke.
- Stay active to keep your mind off smoking and to relieve tension. Take a walk, exercise, or read a book.
- Look for support from others. Join a support group or smoking cessation program.
- Do not go places where many people smoke, such as bars, clubs, and smoking sections of restaurants.

How smoking harms the unborn baby

Babies born to mothers who smoke:

- are more likely to be born prematurely and with a low birth weight (below 2.5kg or 5lb 8oz).
- have a birth weight on average 200g (7oz) less than those born to non-smokers. This effect increases proportionally - the more the mother smokes, the less the child weighs.
- have organs that are smaller on average than babies born to non-smokers.
- have poorer lung function.
- are twice as likely to die from cot death. There seems to be a direct link between cot death and parents smoking.
- are ill more frequently. Babies born to women who smoked 15 cigarettes or more a day during pregnancy are taken into hospital twice as often during the first eight months of life.
- get painful diseases such as inflammation of the middle ear and asthmatic bronchitis more frequently in early childhood.
- are more likely to become smokers themselves in later years.

In addition, pregnant women who smoke increase their risk of early miscarriage.

In later pregnancy, smoking mothers are at increased risk of the baby's placenta coming away from the womb before the baby is born (placental abruption). This may cause the baby to be born prematurely, starve of oxygen, or even to die in the womb (stillborn).

Smoking and your unborn baby

The umbilical cord is your baby's lifeline. The blood that flows through this cord gives your baby all the oxygen and nutrients it needs to grow.

When you smoke a cigarette you inhale the gas carbon monoxide. This means that the amount of oxygen available to your baby through the umbilical cord is reduced. This makes the baby's heart beat more rapidly, and increases overall stress on its developing body. Smoking can also reduce the flow of blood through the placenta, which limits the amount of nutrients that feed the baby.

Smoking, pregnancy and birth

- Smokers have a greater risk of ectopic pregnancy (a pregnancy outside the uterus) and miscarriage
- Smokers have a higher risk of having a premature baby.
- Smokers are more likely to have complications of pregnancy affecting the placenta.
- Smokers are more likely to have a low birthweight baby.
- Babies born with a lower than average birthweight are at more risk of infection and other health problems.
- Smoking during pregnancy increases the chances of the baby dying at or shortly after birth.

After baby is born

- The risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS, or 'cot death') is increased in babies of mothers who smoke during pregnancy or after birth. Keep baby safe by asking smokers to always go outside your home and car to smoke.
- Many of the 4,000+ chemicals the mother inhales are passed on to the baby through breast milk and through passive smoking.
- Babies of smokers are more likely to suffer from asthma and other respiratory infections.

- Children exposed to tobacco smoke have more middle ear infections.

Breastfeeding

Breast milk protects your baby against infection, but if you smoke, you are likely to have reduced production of breast milk and some harmful substances may be absorbed by the baby through the breast milk. If you are having difficulty quitting smoking, try not to smoke just before or during feeds, and always go outside to smoke. If you can't give it up completely, keep working on it. Remember, even if you do smoke, breastfeeding is preferable to bottle-feeding because of the important nutrients and protective factors in breast milk.

As a mother, protect your baby's health by not smoking and by asking family and visitors to always go outside to smoke.

Passive smoking

Every time someone smokes around you or your children, you are all smoking too. This is called passive smoking or environmental tobacco smoke (ETS). ETS can affect the health of children:

- Young children have smaller, more delicate lungs than adults. This may mean that they are more affected by tobacco smoke and the chemicals it contains.
- Children of smokers are more likely to suffer from asthma and other respiratory infections.
- Children exposed to tobacco smoke are more likely to cough during the night.

Smoking during pregnancy affects speech-processing ability in newborn infants.

Smoking during pregnancy affects speech-processing ability in newborn infants. Our findings indicate that prenatal exposure to tobacco smoke in otherwise healthy babies is linked with significant changes in brain physiology associated with basic perceptual skills that could place the infant at risk for later developmental problems

Smoking during pregnancy and newborn neurobehavior.

the tobacco-exposed infants were more excitable and hypertonic, required more handling and showed more stress/abstinence signs, specifically in the central nervous system (CNS), gastrointestinal, and visual areas.