



# CIGARETTES AND TOBACCO

## About cigarettes and tobacco

There are many chemicals associated with smoking. These include ammonia, cyanide and phenol. Some of the chemicals include carbon monoxide and tar, which have been proven to cause cancer. Nicotine is the addictive ingredient in cigarettes and tobacco.

## Effects on pregnancy

Smoking cigarettes and tobacco is associated with reduced oxygen supply and blood flow to the developing baby. Nicotine increases your heart rate and your baby's heart rate. It causes your blood vessels to narrow, reducing the flow of blood through the umbilical cord. Your baby starts exercising their chest muscles in the uterus, preparing them for the task of breathing after they are born. Smoking has the effect of reducing these breathing movements. The effect of tobacco on your baby is dose related, that is, the more cigarettes you smoke, the greater the harm.

When you smoke, carbon monoxide replaces oxygen in your blood, so the amount of oxygen made available to your baby through the umbilical cord and placenta is reduced.

Smoking in pregnancy is linked to miscarriage, low birth weight and premature birth. In older children it is linked with asthma, breathing conditions and behavioural problems such as attention deficit disorder or hyperactivity. Birth weight is less likely to be affected if you stop smoking by the fourth month of pregnancy.

## Counselling in pregnancy

Pregnancy is a good motivator to reduce or stop smoking. Counselling may assist you to:

- » explore personal issues and make positive changes
- » learn new ways to manage stress
- » recognise situations and triggers which may increase your tobacco use
- » develop strategies to reduce or stop smoking
- » be linked with good support services
- » access information about harm minimisation, in order to reduce the harm to yourself and your pregnancy
- » encourage your partner to consider quitting.

QUIT is a government initiative to provide support while you stop or reduce smoking. Contact details are below.

**Quit: [www.quit.org.au](http://www.quit.org.au) - a site to help you quit or help you find out more about how smoking harms you.**  
**Tel: 137848**

## Pregnancy care

Before you get pregnant or when you know you are pregnant, you need to seek help from a health care provider to reduce or quit smoking. Quitting without medication is best but if you are finding this difficult your health care provider may suggest nicotine replacement therapy (eg. patches and gum).

You may need dietary supplements such as iron and calcium throughout your pregnancy. All women should take folate before conceiving and for at least the first three months of their pregnancy.

Most women have some nausea, vomiting and constipation during pregnancy. If you are worried though, talk to your midwife or doctor about what you can do. They may refer you to a dietitian. Eating well during pregnancy and whilst you are breastfeeding is important for the health of you and your baby. Good dental care is important for all pregnant women.

Visit the Women's website for more information about a healthy pregnancy, diet and breastfeeding information. [www.thewomens.org.au/health-information/pregnancy-and-birth/pregnancy-drugs-alcohol/](http://www.thewomens.org.au/health-information/pregnancy-and-birth/pregnancy-drugs-alcohol/).

## Breastfeeding

Nicotine passes rapidly into breast milk and can interfere with your milk supply. When babies get doses of nicotine from breast milk and from passive smoking they are more likely to get respiratory tract infections, vomiting, diarrhoea and increased irritability. Breastfeeding has a great number of advantages; therefore it is better to breastfeed and smoke than not breastfeed at all. Always breastfeed before smoking and try to avoid smoking for at least half an hour before breastfeeding.

## Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and sleeping accidents

Research has identified several ways to care for your baby that will reduce the risk of sudden and unexpected infant death, including Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and fatal sleeping accidents.

If you are smoking, using drugs, alcohol or medicines that make you feel drowsy, sleeping with your baby is dangerous. Anything that makes you sleep deeply will make it hard for you to respond properly to your baby's needs. You may also be less aware of where your baby is in your bed and any dangerous positions your baby may be in. These things greatly increase the risk of your baby dying suddenly.

It is important that a baby is in a smoke free environment at all times, sleeps in their own cot (never on the couch), lies on their back without their face or head covered with their feet touching the bottom of the cot, which makes wriggling under the blankets less likely.

For more information, speak with your midwife or doctor or contact Red Nose on 1300 308 307 for the cost of a local call or visit their website - [www.rednose.com.au](http://www.rednose.com.au)

## For more information

### On the Women's website

[www.thewomens.org.au/wm-pregnancy-drugs-alcohol](http://www.thewomens.org.au/wm-pregnancy-drugs-alcohol)

### Women's Alcohol and Drug Service

Royal Women's Hospital  
8.30am–5.30pm Monday to Friday  
Tel: (03) 8345 3931  
Email: [wads@thewomens.org.au](mailto:wads@thewomens.org.au)

### DirectLine

DirectLine is part of Turning Point's state-wide telephone service network, providing 24-hour, seven day counselling, information and referral to alcohol and drug treatment and support services throughout Victoria. DirectLine is a free, anonymous and confidential service. | Tel: 1800 888 236

### Quit

Visit this website to help you quit or help you find out more about how smoking harms you.  
Tel: 137848 | [www.quit.org.au](http://www.quit.org.au)

### Red Nose

Tel: 1300 308 307 | [www.rednose.com.au](http://www.rednose.com.au)