

WebMD[®]

TAKE CONTROL

SMOKING CESSATION

BY THE NUMBERS

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SPRING 2025



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TAKE ONE HOME



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THE LATEST ON SMOKING CESSATION

MOTHER'S MILK

Cigarette smoke puts harmful levels of trace and toxic metals in your breast milk—whether you smoke or someone near you does. In a study, researchers collected milk samples from 100 breastfeeding mothers—smokers, nonsmokers, and mothers who get regular exposure to secondhand smoke. The breast milk of smoking moms and the breast milk from moms who breathe secondhand smoke contained higher levels of dangerous metals than the milk from nonsmokers. Moms that smoke or live around smoking had arsenic, cadmium, mercury, and lead in their breast milk.

SOURCE: *Scientific Reports*

Up to **300,000**

Number of lower respiratory infections in infants and children under 18 months caused by secondhand smoke.

SOURCE: American Lung Association

430

Number of sudden infant deaths caused by secondhand smoke each year.

SOURCE: American Lung Association

LOW BIRTH WEIGHT: LOWER YOUR RISK

Every year, 20 million babies are born under 5.5 pounds—a risk factor for many health problems. In a new study that aimed to rank the risk factors for low birth weight, smoking during pregnancy still ranked high. Researchers looked at the birthweights of 693,377 babies born over a 20-year span and certain characteristics of the mothers. They found that the biggest risk factors for low birth weight were giving birth to multiples, a history of preterm birth, maternal mental illness, smoking, drinking and drug use, and underlying health conditions like diabetes and anemia. Ask your doctor how you can lower your risk.

SOURCE: *BMJ Open*

PROTECT YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH

Nicotine during pregnancy—whether from cigarettes, vaping, or nicotine gum—can have long-lasting consequences for your baby. In an investigation that analyzed years of prior studies, researchers concluded that nicotine use during pregnancy can cause brain changes in the fetus that may raise the baby's risk for mental illnesses, neurological disorders, and other health problems including ADHD, schizophrenia, anxiety, obesity, and future adolescent substance abuse.

SOURCE: *Advances in Drug and Alcohol Research*



BAONA/VIA GETTY IMAGES



Smoking during pregnancy increases birth defects and creates **long-term health effects** for mothers.



The best time to quit smoking

is before pregnancy, but it's never too late to quit to help improve you and your baby's health.

Quitting smoking is possible with free and proven cessation tools.

Tobacco Free Florida can help.

For more information, visit
TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/QuitYourWay.



STATS & FACTS

By Sonya Collins
Reviewed by Melinda Ratini, DO, MS,
WebMD Medical Reviewer

Ages at which women are most likely
to smoke during pregnancy.

20 to 24



1 in 4

Number of women who stop smoking
during pregnancy.

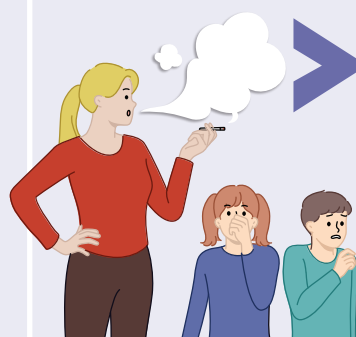
5.5%

Number of women
who report smoking
while pregnant.



3x

Increase in a baby's risk of SIDS
(sudden infant death syndrome)
when their mother smokes.



> 1 in 8

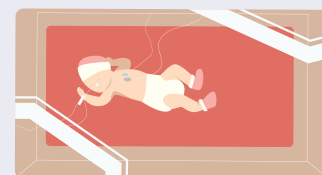
Number of smoking
parents who smoke inside
the house, which can
cause long-term health
problems for the children.

78%



Increase in your
odds of having a
low birthweight
baby when you
smoke during
pregnancy.

2x



Increase in risk of preterm birth in women who smoke
during pregnancy.

SOURCES: CDC, UpToDate, Better Health, *BMC Public Health*, *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, *Nicotine and Tobacco Research*



EMBRACE A **TOBACCO FREE LIFE** FOR BOTH YOU AND YOUR BABY.

Whether you're...



Looking to get pregnant



Expecting a baby



Have a newborn

...it's always a good idea and the right time to quit smoking.

DID YOU KNOW?

- ◆ Women who smoke have a higher risk of never being able to become pregnant.
- ◆ Smoking during pregnancy can harm the baby's lungs, heart and brain. It can even be fatal.
- ◆ Women who quit smoking are less likely to develop heart disease, lung disease and many different forms of cancer.
- ◆ Smoking during or after pregnancy increases the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

**Free quit tools and services are available from Tobacco Free Florida
and are proven effective to help you stay quit.**

For more information, visit
TobaccoFreeFlorida.com/EmbraceForBoth.



**Florida
HEALTH**

WHY IS QUITTING SMOKING SO DIFFICULT?

An expert weighs in

By Kendall K. Morgan

Reviewed by Melinda Ratini, DO, MS, WebMD Medical Reviewer

It's especially important to quit smoking when you're pregnant or trying to get pregnant. But quitting isn't easy.

Understanding what makes quitting hard may help you go easier on yourself. It may also help you find a way around the challenges and say goodbye to smoking. Beating yourself up isn't the solution.

SMOKING IS ADDICTIVE

Nicotine is highly addictive, says Humberto Choi, MD, a pulmonologist at Cleveland Clinic's main campus in Ohio.

"Many people smoke for a long time," Choi says. "Over time, you develop tolerance to nicotine. You'll need to smoke more to get the same effect."

YOUR BRAIN ON NICOTINE

When you smoke, nicotine goes quickly to your brain. Once there, your brain releases other chemicals that give you a good feeling. As you get used to that, your brain actually starts to work differently.

Without nicotine, you may feel anxious or upset. You may find it hard to think or sleep. It will get better over time. But if you're struggling to get through this stage, ask your doctor for help.

BREAK THE HABIT

You probably smoke at certain times of the day or during or after certain activities.

"When you talk to people who smoke and have a hard time [quitting], it's not only the nicotine but also the habit," Choi says. "They associate smoking when drinking coffee,

waking up, taking a walk, or doing something pleasurable. That's what makes it hard to stop."

FIGHT THE URGE

You may also find yourself wanting a cigarette when you feel certain ways. Maybe you are stressed out, gloomy, happy, or relaxed.

To quit, you'll need new routines. You'll need to find ways to get through the urges to smoke without lighting up.

TRY, TRY AGAIN

What if you've tried to quit before and it didn't work? You're in good company. Most people who've quit tried more than once before they stopped smoking for good, Choi says.

"People tend to think it's not working or never going to work and feel they don't want to try again," Choi says.

But, he says, you shouldn't expect immediate success. It may take weeks, months, or another try. But it's never too late to improve your health and that of your children by quitting.

TIPS TO QUIT

Make a plan to get through the tough moments. Try the below:

- + Ask your doctor for advice.
- + Go to **Women.SmokeFree.gov** for information and resources.
- + Text Mom to 222888 to join the text messaging program **SmokeFreeMom**.
- + Join an online or local support group.
- + Download an app to help you track your cravings and see your progress.
- + Call **800-Quit-Now** for helpful information and support.

Inclusion of these organizations does not constitute an endorsement by WebMD and no endorsement is implied.

MY LIFE AS A SMOKE-FREE MAMA

Why I traded my bad habit for a good one

By Jamie Zamparelli Reviewed by Melinda Ratini, DO, MS, WebMD Medical Reviewer



Like a lot of kids, I'm ashamed to say, I started smoking in high school. I didn't feel pressured by others. I made my own decision to look cool. Your teen years can be stressful and emotional, so I also did it to relieve some stress.

UP IN SMOKE

At my most, I smoked about a pack a day. I started thinking that cigarettes would help me deal with stress during high school, but I ended up with a lot of issues like sinus problems and allergies, which I have to this day. I also felt tired and run down a lot of the time. Smoking impacted my jobs because I always needed to take a cigarette break. To this day, I still smell like smoke.

When I lived at home, my parents would try to get me to quit. When I moved out on my own, I continued as a smoker.

A PREGNANT PAUSE

When I found out I was pregnant with my first child about 1 month in, I quit smoking and all throughout breastfeeding. Unfortunately, after I finished breastfeeding, the stress of being a new mom led me back to smoking. When I found out I was pregnant with my second son, I quit for good. Not only

did I feel so sick when I smoked again (dizzy, lightheaded, nauseous), but I took a step back and looked at my life. I didn't want my two boys to grow up around smoke. I have been smoke-free now for more than 10 years. The birth of my children was my motivation to quit.

It makes me sad to see someone smoking while pregnant because I know if they had the right support and tried hard enough, they could quit. A lot of times I want to just give them a hug and let them know I am there for them.

A NEW ME

My health is important to me now. I try and do some self-care like meditation or

yoga daily. I also don't drink soda and I take daily vitamins. These days, I stay pretty busy keeping others organized as a virtual assistant. I am also a social media influencer as I post about my life as a mother of three who grew up in New York but now lives in Charlotte, North Carolina. Sometimes if I smell someone smoking, it takes me back to that feeling of the initial calm I got when I smoked. However, I think about the negative aspects and how many times it made me feel lightheaded and sick and the temptation passes. My addiction now is a healthy one: taking walks with my three children (ages 13, 11, and 6) and raising them to be the best humans they can be.

JAMIE'S TIPS



+ Know your smoking triggers.

My morning coffee and cigarette would go together. So I had to give up coffee for a bit.

+ Find support. Let people know you are trying to quit and let them help you.

+ Write your feelings in a journal.

I always found that writing helped with my stress, which helped me not reach for a cigarette.

THE DANGERS OF SMOKING DURING AND AFTER PREGNANCY

What you should know

By Stephanie Watson

Reviewed by Melinda Ratini, DO, MS, WebMD Medical Reviewer

Everything you do when you're pregnant, your growing baby does, too. When you smoke, thousands of harmful chemicals make their way across the placenta to your baby. One of those chemicals, carbon monoxide, depletes your body of oxygen.

"Babies need a lot of oxygen," says Emily Adhikari, MD, an assistant professor at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas who specializes in maternal-fetal medicine. "Babies who don't get enough oxygen don't grow."

Many of the risks that are linked to smoking during pregnancy—including low birthweight, miscarriage, stillbirth, and premature delivery (before 37 weeks)—happen from a lack of oxygen, blood flow, and nutrition to your growing baby, says Katrina S. Mark, MD, an OB/GYN at the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore.

Babies born to moms who smoke also have more birth defects like cleft lip and cleft palate. These openings in the upper lip or roof of the mouth affect your baby's ability to eat, and they may need to be corrected with surgery.

Smoking is dangerous for you, too. "It carries all the risks that it carried before pregnancy, but additionally, the respiratory risks to mom are increased," Mark says. Smoking lowers your lung capacity and makes it harder for you to breathe.

Having other smokers in the house is also a problem. Babies who are exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to be born small or with birth defects.

RISKS AS YOUR BABY GROWS

The dangers of smoking during pregnancy don't disappear once your baby arrives. "Children who are born to mothers who smoke are at increased risk



for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)," says Kecia Gaither, MD, director of perinatal services and director of maternal fetal medicine at NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln in the Bronx, NY. "As these children grow, they're

WOMEN STILL SMOKE DURING PREGNANCY

Despite the risks involved, about 1 in 14 pregnant women smoke cigarettes during their pregnancy, according to the CDC. If you are one of them, talk to your doctor for help quitting today.



more likely to develop respiratory infections and asthma because the tobacco smoke affected their lung development.”

Damage to the baby’s brain in utero can continue to cause problems later in life. Children of smokers are slower to reach milestones and to learn. They also have more behavior problems than their peers.

WHEN AND HOW TO QUIT

The best time to quit is before you start trying to conceive. Smoking can affect fertility, making it harder for you to get pregnant.

Mark suggests giving yourself at least 30 smoke-free days. Not only are those first 30 days the hardest when you’re trying to quit, but a month will give your body a chance to get back to normal. But, she adds, “Anytime somebody is willing to quit is a good time.” Even late in your pregnancy, quitting can improve the blood flow your baby needs to grow.

THE EFFECTS OF SMOKING ON CHILDREN

Kids born to mothers who smoke are at increased risk for these problems as they grow:

- + Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- + Obesity
- + High blood pressure
- + Type 2 diabetes
- + Asthma
- + Behavior problems

While counseling is the preferred treatment for pregnant women who smoke, talk to your doctor about nicotine replacement products such as a nicotine receptor blocker or an antidepressant that has nicotine receptor-blocking activity. When used during pregnancy, these drugs do not have an increased risk of major birth defects. And while these options are not risk-free, they work better than quitting cold turkey.

Combining these methods with counseling can increase your odds of success. But ultimately, the best smoking cessation technique is the one that works for you.

Be patient with yourself as you try to quit. “I take care of pregnant people who use all manner of drugs, and nicotine is the one that is the hardest to stop,” Mark says. “People should not feel ashamed or defeated if they need support. It’s a process.”

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Make your new health habits a whole family matter



By Rachel Reiff Ellis

Reviewed by Brunilda Nazario, MD,
WebMD Chief Physician Editor, Medical Affairs

Kicking a smoking habit is not a one-time action, it's a longtime lifestyle shift. When your loved ones are part of the plan, it can set you up for lasting success.

ASSEMBLE YOUR SQUAD

When you've committed to quit, don't keep that decision to yourself. Build a group to help get you through the rough parts. Think through who you'd like on your side, whether that's parents, co-workers, friends, a spiritual community, or a partner. Talk openly and honestly about what you've embarked on and concrete ways they can help.

"Tobacco use and dependence is a chronic, relapsing condition that often requires repeated intervention and long-term support," says Jennifer Folkenroth, senior director of nationwide tobacco programs at the American Lung Association. "No person should have to face the challenges of quitting alone."

TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK

When you approach quitting as a group activity, the benefits are far-reaching.

"When someone takes the big step of deciding to quit tobacco use, family and friends can play a critical role in giving their help and support throughout the quit process," Folkenroth says.

In fact, she says, research consistently shows that having strong family support may significantly increase the success rate of quitting smoking and having it stick. The positive reinforcement, encouragement, and accountability family provides can help you turn away from smoking both in the moment and for good.

GIVE THEM GUIDANCE

Tips for helping your loved ones help you quit.

- + **Tell them what you need.** If you aren't sure, brainstorm together.
- + **Set up rewards.** Celebrate small wins—a week or month smoke-free—with a fun outing.
- + **Plan distractions.** Spend time together at the most triggering times.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Find direction in advice from an expert

By Rachel Reiff Ellis Reviewed by Brunilda Nazario, MD, WebMD Chief Physician Editor, Medical Affairs

Trying to quit smoking can sometimes feel like pushing a boulder up a hill. But even though it's hard at times, you *can* do it. Use these uplifting words as motivation for your journey.

SET A DATE

If you haven't already, give yourself a concrete goal to work toward. Talk to your doctor or other guiding voice to help you decide when that might realistically be.

"Make sure you choose a day that gives you enough time to prepare mentally, physically, and emotionally," says Michael Kosloski, tobacco treatment specialist at RWJBarnabas Health in Philadelphia.

Some people find that starting at the "beginning"—the first day of the week, month, or year—is a good way to kick off a new habit.

FIGURE OUT WHAT TRIGGERS YOU

Like most habits, smoking happens at regular times, some of which you may not be aware of. Take some time to note when you crave a cigarette and write it down. When those moments arrive in the future, you'll be prepared with preventative measures.

"Common triggers include being around other smokers, drinking alcohol or coffee, and stress," Kosloski says.

FIND A BUDDY

Make sure you have a support system to encourage you and lift you up when the going gets tough.

"Having a support system can make all the difference when you're trying to quit," Kosloski says.

If you have a friend who's in the same boat as you are, you can be accountability partners and find new hobbies

and habits together. Support groups are another lifeline for those looking to change their lifestyle for good.

RECOGNIZE YOUR WINS

Quitting smoking is hard work, so be sure you're marking success, no matter how small, says Kosloski.

One way to do this is to set aside some of the money you would have spent on cigarettes and use it to buy something that brings you joy. Take yourself or a loved one out for a nice dinner, or treat yourself to a concert or other outing.

"You're doing a difficult thing, but you will get there," Kosloski says. "Keep going."





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