

# Second-hand Smoke During Pregnancy



Region of Waterloo  
PUBLIC HEALTH

## What is second-hand smoke

Second-hand smoke is the smoke that goes into the air from the end of a burning cigarette, and smoke that is breathed out from someone smoking a cigarette.

## Second-hand smoke affects unborn babies:

Mother and baby are joined by the placenta and umbilical cord. More than 4,000 chemicals including nicotine and carbon monoxide are in second-hand smoke and these pass from the mother's blood to the baby through the placenta.

## What happens when a woman breathes in second-hand smoke:

- Her placenta may not work as well as it should
- Her baby gets less food and oxygen
- Her baby does not grow as well as it should

## What can a woman do to protect herself and her baby?

- Ask others not to smoke around you and your baby
- Leave places where there is smoking
- Make your home and car smoke-free
- Breast milk is the best choice for your baby, even if you smoke
- To decrease the effects of smoking on your baby, breastfeed before you smoke and remove your smoking clothes and wash your hands before coming inside or holding your baby

## What if the baby's parent or other family members smoke?

- Ask them not to smoke in your home. Set up an area outside for people to smoke
- Ask them not to smoke in the car. Under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, it is illegal to smoke or hold a lit cigarette in a motor vehicle if another person who is less than 16 years old is inside the vehicle
- For help to quit smoking, contact a health care provider or call Smokers' Helpline at 1-877-513-5333.



*Information adapted from  
the Region of Ottawa-  
Carlton Health Department  
and Algoma Best Start  
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**Region of Waterloo Public Health**

*Tobacco and Cancer Prevention*