

Smoking During Pregnancy



Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH

It is never too late to quit smoking

It is not easy to give up cigarettes but the benefits of quitting smoking can last a lifetime for you and your baby.

How does smoking affect an unborn child?

The chemicals in tobacco smoke move from the mother's blood to the baby's blood and cause the baby to:

- Get less food and oxygen
- Be smaller in size and less healthy

There can also be an increased risk of miscarriage and other health problems. After birth, babies may have sleeping and eating problems and get sick more often.

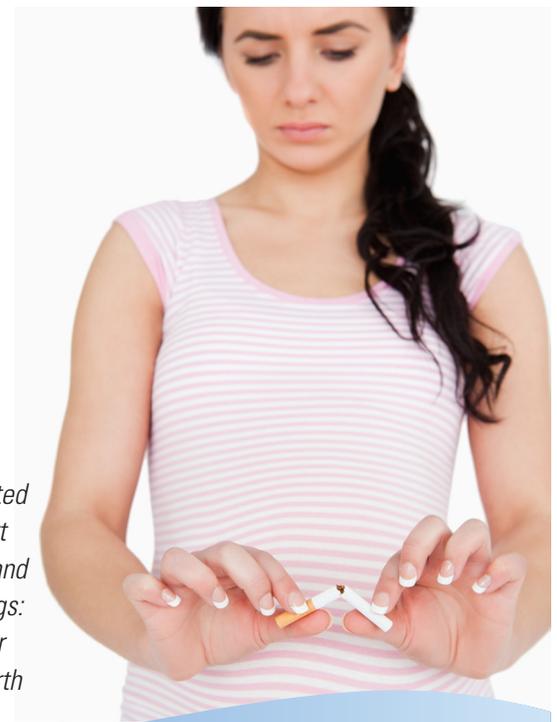
If you are already pregnant, studies show that if you quit smoking before you reach 16 weeks, there is less chance that your baby will be born too early or too small.

However, you and your baby will still benefit if you quit later in your pregnancy. Even cutting down on the amount you smoke could increase your baby's birth weight.

Some women feel that having a small baby is easier for giving birth. This is **not true**. In fact, there can be more problems with labour and birth such as having a premature baby who has more trouble breathing. Babies born too early or too small have more health problems and they often need to stay longer in the hospital after birth.

If you are thinking about quitting smoking, remember:

- It is easier for pregnant women to quit if those around them do not smoke
- Babies of women who quit smoking early in pregnancy do as well as babies of non smoking mothers
- Help is available. See your health care provider or call Smokers' Helpline at 1-877-513-5333



Information adapted from: A New Start in Life pamphlet and Healthy Beginnings: Your handbook for pregnancy and birth April 2000

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Tobacco and Cancer Prevention