

Smoking



Smoking both during pregnancy and after your baby is born greatly increases the chance of SIDS. Your baby can be affected by either you or your partner smoking

Quitting smoking is one of the most important things you can do for your baby. We know that giving up smoking is a huge challenge for many new parents, but support is out there. Smoking during pregnancy and after your baby is born greatly increases the chance of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). The chance of SIDS increases whether it is a baby's mother or father who is the smoker. Keeping your baby smoke-free before and after birth is the best way to reduce this risk

Both you and your partner should try not to smoke during pregnancy and after the birth

Babies who are born to mothers who smoked during pregnancy and/or who grow up in a smoky atmosphere have a much higher chance of SIDS. It has been shown that smoking even just a few cigarettes per day during pregnancy can increase the chance of SIDS by up to four times, while smoking more than 20 cigarettes per day can increase the chance by nearly nine times

You should also keep your baby out of smoky areas - don't let people smoke near your baby and keep your home, car, and other places your baby spends time, smoke free

We also know that even if a baby's parents don't smoke, the baby's risk is increased by being in smoky environments after birth. A smoky environment is anywhere near someone who is smoking, or in a room where someone has smoked. We know tobacco smoke is harmful to other aspects of your baby's health as well

If you or your partner smokes, you should not share a bed or sofa to sleep with your baby as this greatly increases the chance of SIDS even if you do not smoke in the bedroom

It is especially important that you do not share a bed with your baby if either parent is a smoker, even if you don't smoke in the bedroom. It has been shown that the chance of SIDS if bed sharing when you or your partner is a smoker is much greater than if you were both non-smokers. Whether you or your partner are a smoker or not, there is NEVER a safe time to sleep on a sofa or arm chair with a baby day or night.



Research corner

There is strong, consistent evidence from studies worldwide that smoking during and after pregnancy increases the risk of SIDS. During pregnancy, the number of cigarettes smoked is highly associated with risk. Therefore, the more cigarettes smoked, the higher risk of SIDS. For example, two studies showed that the risk of SIDS was about 2½ to 4 times higher in mothers who smoked 1-10 cigarettes per day, versus the risk in non-smokers, and about 7 to 8½ times higher in mothers who smoke over 20 cigarettes a day. Passive smoking also significantly increases the risk of SIDS and the risk increases further where both parents smoke

Frequently asked questions



How can I give up smoking?

Giving up smoking can be very tough, but it is worth it for both you and your baby. You have the best chance of succeeding by getting help from professionals. Speak to your midwife or health visitor, or go directly to your local stop smoking service. They will have seen many smoking, pregnant women, and are there to help. For advice and support call SmokeFree on 0800 022 4332 or visit www.smokefree.nhs.uk/smoking-and-pregnancy/

What are e-cigarettes and are they safe for my baby?

Electronic cigarettes look and feel like cigarettes, but do not produce smoke. Nicotine is stored in a small cartridge and delivered to the user in a water vapour when you draw on the mouthpiece. E-cigarettes are gaining popularity, however we don't yet know the full impact of e-cigarette use to the user and to infants second-hand. The World Health Organisation is yet to establish how safe e-cigarettes are around children. It's important to remain cautious when using nicotine or other drugs around your baby, and remember to never share a bed if you smoke or have consumed alcohol or any other drugs

What is Nicotine Replacement Therapy, and is it safe in pregnancy?

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) involves the use of gum, patches or tablets to deliver a small amount of nicotine into your bloodstream. They are said to help you to deal with cravings by giving your body nicotine without some of the harmful by-products of smoking (e.g. carbon monoxide and tar). Most pregnant women can use NRT safely, though it's important to talk it through with your doctors first

No one in my home smokes, and we rarely go anywhere smoky but I still worry if my child ever goes into a smoky environment. Can this increase the risk of SIDS?

The risk of SIDS from very occasional exposure to a smoky environment is likely to be very low, but there isn't enough scientific evidence for us to know the precise risk. Try to keep your baby smoke-free at all times to keep them safe

Is it safe to breastfeed if I smoke?

Breastfeeding has many benefits and regardless of whether you are a smoker or not it is the best way to feed your baby

If I decide to continue smoking, are there ways of doing it more safely around my baby?

Although it is safest for your baby to not be exposed to cigarette smoke at all, there are ways of reducing the smoke in the baby's environment that can reduce the harmful effects of smoking:

Ensure your home is a smoke-free zone and always go outside to smoke. If you are on your own, never leave your baby alone – take them outside in a pram but keep a safe distance between you.

Don't let anyone else smoke in your house, including family, friends and other visitors. Ask anyone who wishes to smoke to go outside.

Smoking in the car with your baby can be very harmful. Try to avoid smoking in the car on short trips, and on longer trips stop for a break and get out of the car to smoke.

Try to introduce Nicotine Replacement Therapy as much as possible

It's important to remember, however, that after a cigarette the smoke will still be on your clothes, hands and in your hair, and there is not enough current research for us to understand exactly how harmful this may be to your baby. Cutting down the number of cigarettes you have per day could have beneficial if you cannot quit altogether