

“There’s nothing wrong with having a low birth weight baby—it just means a quicker and easier birth”

Having a low birthweight baby does not make things easier for you or your baby during birth. A smaller baby is more likely to become distressed, leading to a more complicated delivery. Labour with a low birthweight baby is no easier or shorter than labour with an average birthweight baby. Low birthweight may also mean that your baby is not fully developed (known as foetal growth retardation).

“Smoking relaxes me and being relaxed is better for my baby”

Smoking may calm you down, but it also speeds up your heart rate, increases your blood pressure and depresses your nervous system. The feeling of relaxation experienced by many smokers is due to the nicotine in tobacco alleviating withdrawals, and because of the actual time taken to have a cigarette.

“I’m already three months pregnant. What’s the point of stopping now? The damage is done”

Quitting at any stage during your pregnancy will reduce the harmful effects of smoking on you and your baby. If you quit before you are pregnant or early in your pregnancy, your risk of having a low birthweight baby will be similar to that of a non-smoker.

“Cutting down the number of cigarettes I smoke during pregnancy is good enough”

Cutting down can help you quit, but even a few cigarettes a day means many chemicals will be in your growing baby’s food supply and will reduce your own health when you need it most. There is no “safe” level of smoking. Planning to quit as early as you can means you can give your baby a better start to life.

“If I stop smoking I’ll put on too much weight”

During pregnancy you will need more energy and nutrition to cope with the needs of your growing baby and to maintain your own health. Eating a balanced diet is one of the best ways to stay within a healthy weight range, especially while pregnant. Going for a walk, swimming or practicing yoga are great ways to deal with cravings and can get you interested in a new hobby.

Where can I get support to quit?

- **Quitline (13 QUIT).** Counsellors are available seven days a week to help you through the process of quitting. Call Quitline (13 7848) and ask about tailored support available to help pregnant women quit smoking.
- **Talk to your health professional.** Discuss quitting smoking with a general practitioner (GP), midwife, pharmacist or community health worker.
- **Consider using nicotine replacement products** such as gum, lozenges, mouth spray or patches. These products work by replacing some of the nicotine from cigarettes without passing on the harmful chemicals found in tobacco smoke, thus reducing withdrawal symptoms, such as cravings and anxiety. For more information on using nicotine replacement products while you are pregnant, call Quitline (13 7848).
- **Download the ‘Quit for you—Quit for two’** free quit smoking app for mums to be. Available from the Google Play Store and Apple iTunes online store.

Further information

www.qld.gov.au/health/staying-healthy/atods/smoking



Smoking and pregnancy

Choosing to quit smoking, eating healthy foods and avoiding alcohol when you are pregnant will not only make you feel better; it will give your baby the best start in life.

If you're planning a pregnancy, pregnant or breastfeeding, now is a good time to quit smoking.

Every cigarette you smoke has an immediate effect on both you and your baby. Cigarettes contain more than 7000 chemicals; from these, at least 250 are known to be harmful (such as hydrogen, cyanide and carbon monoxide). When you smoke, these toxic chemicals enter your bloodstream. For example, the carbon monoxide you inhale replaces some of the oxygen in your blood, which reduces the amount of oxygen getting to your baby and slows their growth.

When you quit, your body can start to get rid of these chemicals immediately—which is good for you, and for your baby.

Smoking during pregnancy harms your baby and may lead to a greater chance of:

- Miscarriage
- Birth complications
- Having an underweight baby, making them more vulnerable to infection and health problems in adulthood
- Premature birth (earlier than 37 weeks)
- Baby being born with weaker lungs
- Infant mortality—babies of mothers who smoke before and after birth are three times more likely to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding gives your baby a good start in life. Breast milk contains a wide range of essential nutrients for your baby. It also helps to protect your baby against infection. If you continue to smoke while you breastfeed, toxic chemicals from tobacco are passed onto your baby through your breast milk.

Did you know?

- Women who smoke tend to produce less breast milk.
- Nicotine can also alter the flavour of breast milk, and as a result your baby may struggle at your breast or even refuse your breast.

Quitting smoking is the best for you and your baby

Changes to your body from the time you quit

20 minutes	Your heart rate drops
12 hours	Blood levels of carbon monoxide drop dramatically—increasing the amount of oxygen available to you and your baby
Within 3 months	Lung function and circulation improve
1 year	Risk of coronary heart disease is halved compared to continuing smokers
10 years	Risk of death from lung cancer is about half of a continuing smoker, and continues to decline. Risk of bladder, kidney and pancreatic cancers decrease
15 years	Risk of coronary heart disease and risk of death is the same as someone who has never smoked

Making your home a smoke free zone will help you to quit, and will reduce your baby's exposure to the dangers of tobacco smoke. If your partner smokes, encourage them to consider quitting too.

