



Give your baby a breather

help and advice on giving up
smoking during pregnancy



For help on stopping smoking visit
www.stopsmokingni.info



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Section 1 - Why give up?

Stopping smoking is the single most important thing you can do to protect your health. If you're pregnant, or even thinking about getting pregnant, giving up will help protect your baby's health too.

- When you smoke, you breathe in nicotine, tar and carbon monoxide.
- You also breathe in around 4,000 other chemicals, many of them poisonous – like arsenic, ammonia and benzene.
- The tar and some chemicals build up inside your lungs, where they may eventually cause cancer.
- Nicotine, carbon monoxide and the other chemicals rush from your lungs into your bloodstream, reducing the amount of oxygen in your blood.
- **All these substances get into your baby's bloodstream from yours.**

You probably already know that quitting smoking will reduce your risk of serious illnesses, but there are extra benefits if you're pregnant.

Medical research has shown that women who smoke while pregnant are more likely to suffer from sickness, bleeding or miscarriage, as well as other complications. The range of health risks to your baby can be found in Section 2.

Isn't it too late if I'm already pregnant?

Giving up smoking **at any stage** in your pregnancy is good for you and your baby – it's never too late. As soon as you stop, the chemicals will start to clear from your body and your baby will get more oxygen. So give yourself and your baby a head start by giving up for good.

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Quitting can be really hard

Some people find giving up smoking is one of the hardest things they ever do. Smoking is powerfully addictive – some scientists say it's as addictive as heroin. But thousands of people manage to stop smoking every year, and you can too.

You may have already tried to stop smoking. If you have, that's a good sign. Research shows that the more times you try to quit, the more likely you are to succeed in the end.

Being pregnant is a great reason for giving up smoking – one decision that benefits two lives. If you need motivation, this leaflet tells you exactly how smoking while pregnant can affect your and your baby's health.

The leaflet provides basic advice on how to give up smoking, but free professional help is available throughout Northern Ireland – see page 16 for details.

Section 2 - How can smoking affect my baby?

When you smoke a cigarette, all the poisonous substances you breathe in get into your bloodstream, and from there, into your baby's blood too. This means both of you are at risk. All the following effects have been proven by recent medical research.

Pregnancy complications

Smoking increases the risk of a number of pregnancy complications. Compared to non-smokers, smokers are:

- 25% more likely to have a **miscarriage**;
- up to three times more likely than non-smokers to develop a **problem with the placenta**.

Babies born to mothers who smoke are 40% more likely to be **stillborn** than babies born to non-smokers.

Smoking during pregnancy increases the chance of fetal and infant eye disorders like strabismus (crossed eyes) and underdevelopment of the optic nerve, which is a leading cause of **blindness** in children.

Low birth weight

Smoking cuts down the amount of oxygen and nutrients that get to your baby through the placenta. Your baby needs these to grow and develop, so babies of women who smoke tend to be smaller.


If you smoke all through your pregnancy, on average your baby will be almost half a pound (200 to 250g) lighter than if you'd been a non-smoker. It may not sound like much, but size is critical. Smaller babies are more **at risk of infections** and **other health problems** throughout their lives.

And don't be misled into thinking that a smaller baby means an easier delivery. The baby's head won't be much smaller, and that's the most difficult bit to get out.

Cot death

Smoking during pregnancy or after the baby is born substantially increases the risk of **cot death** by up to three times. Some studies suggest that a quarter of all cot deaths are caused by smoking.

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A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a baby's face, showing the nose, mouth, and chin. The baby appears to be smiling or has a neutral expression. The skin is light and the background is a soft, out-of-focus pinkish-red.

Asthma, wheezing and chest infections

Smoking while pregnant damages the development of the baby's lungs. Babies born to women who smoke are more likely to develop **asthma**, and are also at greater risk of other **lung problems**, such as wheezing and chest infections.

Ear infections

Children who live with at least one parent who smokes are nearly 50% more likely to suffer from 'glue ear', which can cause partial deafness.

Colic

Babies whose mothers smoke are twice as likely to suffer from infantile colic as those whose mothers don't smoke.

Passive smoking and your baby

Babies and children need to be protected from passive smoking, ideally by making your home a smoke-free zone. Cigarette smoke can trigger asthma attacks or chest infections, but there are other dangers too.

Partners of pregnant women

If your partner smokes, ask them to quit smoking along with you. Help and support is available across Northern Ireland. To find out more, visit www.stopsmokingni.info

Section 3 - Stop smoking and save £££s

Here's another reason to stop – think what else you could do with the money you spend on cigarettes. The table below shows how much money you would save if you stopped smoking.

With a baby on the way, there are lots of things you're going to need to buy – just a few weeks of not smoking could save you enough money to buy a new cot or pram. Give up for a few months and you could save enough for a family holiday.

Cigarettes per day	24 hours/ 1 day	1 week	1 month	1 year	5 years
5	£2.99	£20.90	£89.55	£1,089.53	£5,447.63
10	£5.97	£41.79	£179.10	£2,179.05	£10,895.25
20	£11.94	£83.58	£358.20	£4,358.10	£21,790.50
30	£17.91	£125.37	£537.30	£6,537.15	£32,685.75
40	£23.88	£167.16	£716.40	£8,716.20	£43,581.00

Based on £11.94 for a pack of 20 cigarettes

Section 4 - Getting ready to stop

People have lots of different reasons for wanting to stop smoking. Your pregnancy is one good reason, but there are lots of others. The list below shows just some of them. Tick the ones that apply to you and add a couple of your own if you like. Keep the list handy over the next few weeks.

- ☐ I want to feel better.
- ☐ I want my baby to be born healthy.
- ☐ I want to live to see my children grow up.
- ☐ I don't want my children to be smokers.
- ☐ I don't like being addicted.
- ☐ I'm afraid of getting cancer.
- ☐ I don't want to feel out of breath.
- ☐ I could do with the money for other things.
- ☐ It smells, makes the house dirty and clings to clothes.
- ☐
-

It may also help to think about the reasons why you still smoke. Do either of these apply to you?

Smoking helps me cope with stress

In fact, smoking actually causes stress. This is because nicotine is a stimulant. When your nicotine level falls, you feel tense because of the nicotine craving. Smoking boosts your nicotine level again and this relieves the withdrawal, making you feel less stressed.

I'm worried about withdrawal symptoms

Nicotine is a powerful drug and it takes time to clear it from your body. Distract yourself when you get a craving for a cigarette and the feeling will pass. Other symptoms, such as coughing or being more irritable, will only last a few weeks at most and they won't harm you or your baby.

If you have tried giving up and found it very difficult, ask your health professional about licensed nicotine replacement therapy (NRT).

Visit www.stopsmokingni.info for information on your local free stop smoking services.

Licensed NRT helps people give up smoking by reducing their withdrawal symptoms. People use NRT to help concentrate on breaking the habit without going through the cravings. Visit www.stopsmokingni.info for information on a range of licensed NRTs.

Licensed NRT is not a magic cure, but you are twice as likely to succeed in stopping if you use it. Better still, evidence shows that patients who use licensed NRT and receive specialist stop smoking support are four times more likely to quit for good.¹ It's important to talk it through with a health professional first, but a short course of licensed NRT is safer for you and your baby than continuing to smoke. For more information, pick up the *Pregnancy and nicotine replacement therapy (NRT): What you need to know* leaflet at your first antenatal appointment. Unlike cigarettes, licensed NRT doesn't contain tar, carbon monoxide and other poisonous chemicals, and it doesn't cause cancer.

Your GP, community pharmacist or HSC stop smoking service can advise on which licensed NRT is best for you. If you are pregnant, talk to your GP or midwife about licensed NRT.

¹ West R, Shiffman S. Fast facts – smoking cessation. Oxford: Health Press Limited, 2004.

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Section 5 - Stopping

You may find it easier to focus if you pick a definite date to stop smoking. Pick a day coming up soon. Remember you're four times more likely to quit for good by using licensed NRT and specialist support.

My quit date is:.....

Getting through the first few days

Before you stop, decide how you're going to handle the first few days. Smoking is strongly linked to certain times and situations, so:

- if you usually smoke when you're chatting on the phone, move the ashtray;
- if you have a cigarette first thing in the morning, get up and have a shower instead;
- if you enjoy a cigarette after a meal, try cleaning your teeth or chewing sugar-free gum after eating.

Think ahead and ask your friends and family to help you. Your local stop smoking services can advise you on how to handle the difficult times. Visit **www.stopsmokingni.info** for details of your local stop smoking services.

Be prepared

Think of things you can do to keep your hands and mouth busy.

- chew sugar-free gum;
- snack on fruit and veg;
- drink fruit juice;
- doodle with a pen or pencil (or just chew on the end);
- do some cleaning;
- file or paint your nails.

One day at a time

It's a cliché but it works. Make your goal to get through today without smoking, rather than worrying about how you'll manage without cigarettes for the rest of your life.



Section 6 - Staying stopped

Once you've stopped, keep reminding yourself why you've given up smoking. **Stopping smoking is a great achievement**, with huge benefits for you, not just your baby.

There will be times when you are tempted to give in and have a cigarette, but if you stay determined, the temptation will pass. These suggestions may help.

- Keep busy - Boredom can make smoking seem more important to you than it really is.
- Learn to relax and deal with stress. Having a cigarette provides a break for many smokers, a few minutes for themselves. Find a different way to take a break, like making yourself a cup of tea or reading a magazine.
- Reward yourself for each week you manage not to smoke. Use some of the money you would have spent on cigarettes to go to the cinema, have your hair done, or buy yourself a new DVD.

Don't play games. A favourite is "one cigarette won't hurt" or "I'll just have one to prove I've kicked it". Recognise these games for what they are – just excuses to have a cigarette – and don't give in.

If you do have a cigarette, don't give up. Look at it as a temporary slip-up, not a failure. Remind yourself why you want to give up smoking, plan how you can deal with the craving to smoke in the future, and have another go.



Section 7 - Where to find help and advice

Health professionals

The people who are providing your antenatal care can help you. Let them know as soon as you can that you want to stop smoking. Your doctor, midwife, practice nurse, health visitor or community pharmacist can offer you advice and support while you are giving up smoking.

Local stop smoking services

More than 600 free stop smoking services are available across Northern Ireland. Most of these services provide licensed NRT and are run by specially trained staff who can advise you on the best way to stop smoking. Services are offered in many GP practices, community pharmacies, Health and Social Care Trust premises, community and voluntary organisations.

For more information on specialist services near you, visit **www.stopsmokingni.info** and click on the interactive map on the home page.

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Further reading

Pregnancy and nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)

What you need to know

 Public Health
Agency





For help on stopping smoking and to find out
about local stop smoking services visit
www.stopsmokingni.info



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