If you are pregnant and you smoke, you may have thought about quitting and decided you are not ready. Or you may have tried and failed. This tip sheet is designed to:

- Help you strengthen your motivation to quit by learning more about how quitting helps your pregnancy and the health of your baby.
- Help you gradually cut down on the number of cigarettes you smoke if you cannot quit now. Research shows that cutting down reduces the amount of toxic chemicals and nicotine that you and your baby are exposed to. It is also a great step on the way toward quitting.

Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health and your baby’s health. Cutting down over time may help you quit and can reduce the risks of smoking to you and your baby. There’s never a better time than when you are pregnant to move toward being smoke-free!

How smoking affects your pregnancy and your baby’s health

As you probably know, smoking increases your own risk of a heart attack or stroke, cancer, COPD (emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and asthma), and other major health problems. But you may not know how smoking affects pregnancy and puts your baby’s health at risk too.

- You are more likely to miscarry if you smoke during pregnancy.
- Smoking can cause problems with the placenta — the connection between your unborn baby and your womb. For example, this can cause bleeding in the womb, which is dangerous for you and your baby.

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• Smoking during pregnancy increases your baby’s risk of:
  – Being born too early or weighing too little at birth.
  – Sudden infant death syndrome (known as SIDS or crib death). SIDS is the sudden unexplained death of a child less than one year of age. It usually occurs during sleep.
  – Having birth defects such as cleft lip or cleft palate.

If your baby weighs too little at birth:
• It does not make your labor easier.
• It makes it more likely that your newborn may have problems and need to stay in the hospital longer. Babies born too early may even die.
• Low birth weight babies are more likely to have serious health problems that can affect them as newborns, toddlers, and even adults.
• Some babies who are born early have problems in school.

Breathing in cigarette smoke that lingers in the air (secondhand smoke) will make your baby more likely to:
• Have ear and respiratory infections.
• Develop asthma and have more frequent attacks.
• Die of sudden infant death syndrome.

Research continues to reveal more about the risks of tobacco smoke exposure. For example:
• When you or others smoke in your home or car, toxic chemicals in tobacco smoke cling to surfaces. This “thirdhand” smoke remains long after you stop smoking and it resists normal cleaning. It may be a serious health hazard to nonsmokers who are exposed to it, especially children.

The risks described above are serious, but they are not meant to frighten you. They are meant to underscore why quitting smoking is worth the seriously hard work it takes.

Still, knowing the dangers of smoking is just one side of the story. Here is the good news:
The benefits of quitting smoking or cutting down for you and your baby

When you stop smoking or cut down:

- Your baby will get more oxygen. You will be helping your baby develop and grow properly.
- There is less risk that your baby will be born too early or weigh too little. This means there is a better chance that:
  - Your baby will be healthy and come home from the hospital with you.
  - Your baby will have fewer health problems as a newborn, toddler, and even as an adult.
- You will feel better, have more energy, and breathe more easily. This will help you take good care of yourself during and after your pregnancy and also take good care of your newborn.
- You will have more money to spend on the things you need.
- You will feel good about what you are doing for yourself and your baby.

Longer-term benefits include:

- You will be less likely to develop heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, chronic lung disease, and other smoking-related diseases.
- You will be more likely to live to know and enjoy your grandchildren as they grow.
- When you come home, your baby will be exposed to less secondhand and thirdhand smoke. Where you live will be healthier for you, your baby, and others in your household.

You may want to make a list of the benefits that are most important to you. Post it where you will see it often. Looking at the list can help get your mind off smoking.

When to quit during pregnancy or how to cut down

It is best to quit as soon as you can. And remember, it is never too late to quit!

Quitting is better than cutting down. Smoking even a few cigarettes a day means harmful chemicals will still reach your baby and put you and your baby’s health at risk. There is no safe level of smoking.

But if you cannot quit, cut down as much as you can. Reduced smoking may mean reduced health risks.
Reduced smoking

In reduced smoking, you smoke fewer cigarettes according to a planned “step down” schedule over time. Reduced smoking has been shown to help some smokers quit and others to cut down by a great amount.

The Planner for Reduced Smoking included with this tip sheet will help you set reasonable goals for cutting back on your smoking each week. Here is how it works:

- How many cigarettes do you currently smoke on a typical day? Circle that number, or the one closest to it, in column C on the Planner.
- On the line below the circled number, put a “1” in column A. This will be the first week of your reduced smoking plan.
- On that same line, in column B, write the date of the first day you wish to start your reduction plan.
- The number in column C on that line is the highest number of cigarettes you can smoke on any day for the first week of your reduced smoking plan.
- Now go back to column A and number, in order, the rest of the lines going down to the bottom of the chart: 2, 3, 4, and so on.
- Using a calendar, fill in the dates in column B, starting with week 2. Each date should be one week after the date above it. Continue to the bottom of the chart.

Now your week-by-week plan for reduced smoking is ready!

- The easiest way to keep track of the number of cigarettes you can smoke each day is to keep a few empty cigarette packs on hand.
- Each night, check your planner for the number of cigarettes to smoke the next day. Put that number of cigarettes in an empty pack. Do not include any that may be left over from the day before.
- During the next day, make the number of cigarettes you put in the pack last for the entire day.
- As you have fewer cigarettes to smoke, you will find yourself saving them for when your urges are the strongest.
- Make note of when your strong urges strike. Your health coach can share simple strategies that have been proven to get rid of or weaken urges to smoke. Just ask!
- At the end of each week, talk with your health coach about your biggest urges, challenges, and your successes. Then make a plan for the coming week.
Special Note: As you cut down, be careful not to change the way you smoke a cigarette.

For example, it is common to draw harder, breathe deeper, or hold each puff longer when you cut back on smoking. These changes can happen without you being aware of them. Some reducers may smoke each cigarette down further. Others may change how they hold a cigarette, blocking vent holes in the cigarette paper.

These changes can also result in you and your baby getting much more toxins and nicotine from each cigarette. This cancels the benefits of reducing and makes it harder to quit or to stay at a reduced level for long.

How reduced smoking helps

Compared to other quit methods, reduced smoking may have these benefits:

• It might be easier for you than going cold turkey (quitting all at once).
• You can combine it with coaching or quit counseling. Your coach can show you ways to reduce the strength of urges to smoke and cravings for a cigarette.
• It slowly begins to uncouple what triggers you to smoke from actually smoking. This can reduce the number of urges you have over time. The amount of practice and success you gain at managing urges to smoke can help you feel more confident about quitting for good.
• Your intake of nicotine is reduced gradually, provided you do not change the way you smoke each cigarette. You may have fewer or less intense cravings and symptoms of withdrawal as time goes on.

Important: While cutting down, you will be confronting cravings and urges to smoke. It’s also normal to feel more anxious, irritable, restless, or impatient than usual. These are common symptoms of nicotine withdrawal. This gradual reduction plan may help to minimize the discomfort of nicotine withdrawal. But remember, cutting down or quitting is hard work and will take your focused effort!

Whether you choose reduced smoking or another way to quit, your health coach is ready to support you every step of the way.
Getting support

Reaching out for support is key to your success at quitting or cutting down.

Continue to work with your health coach, who can help you learn how to:

- Break your smoking habits.
- Make a personal plan based on your triggers to smoke.
- Snuff out urges by changing what you think and do when urges strike.
- Manage withdrawal symptoms such as feeling irritable or restless, handle setbacks, and stay motivated to stick with your plan.
- And much more!

You may also want to join a quit-smoking group and/or call a toll-free quit line. One example is 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669). Or you may want to chat with an expert online, such as at http://smokefree.gov/talk-to-an-expert.

Talk with your family and friends and ask for their support and encouragement. If others in your household smoke, encourage them to quit with you.


Use a mobile text-messaging app designed to help pregnant women quit smoking. One example is Quit4Baby, available at www.quit4baby.com/. Another example is smokefreeMOM, available at http://smokefree.gov. These text messages provide expert advice, how-to tips, and encouragement.

You can find other tools and resources from the American Cancer Society at www.cancer.org/healthy/stayawayfromtobacco/index. Included is Quit for Life®, a toll-free phone-based coaching and support service that matches smokers with a quit-smoking coach. It provides emails, text messages, and unlimited access to an online community.
### Take Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Check when completed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• If you are ready to quit: Ask your health coach to help you create a personal quit plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If you feel certain that quitting now is not right for you, and you are willing to cut down: Use the Planner for Reduced Smoking included with this tip sheet. Work with your health coach to support your success.</td>
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</table>

### Staying on the path to wellness

- Talk with your health coach every week to discuss your progress with cutting down or quitting tobacco. Be sure to call when you hit a rough spot or lose some ground. Your health coach is ready to help you!
- Talk with your health coach about:
  - Coping better with stress.
  - Eating healthier.
  - Staying on track with your weight.
  - Being more active.

All of these things will help you and your baby grow healthier and make it easier to cut down or quit tobacco.
The information in this tip sheet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Before making changes, always talk to your doctor about what is right for you.

Sources:


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## Planner for Reduced Smoking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week number</td>
<td>Week starts on this date</td>
<td>I will smoke no more than this many cigarettes per day.</td>
<td>Check one column at the end of each week.</td>
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<td>I’m doing it! I’m ready to step down further next week.</td>
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<td>I plan to stay at this level another week.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I made it! My baby and I are smoke-free!</td>
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