

Smoking

Smoking both during pregnancy and after your baby is born greatly increases the chance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (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 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.nhs.uk/smokefree

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

There is currently no research on e-cigarettes and SIDS but using an e-cigarette seems to be much safer than smoking. Giving up completely is the best option, but if you do choose to use an e-cigarette continue to keep your baby away from e-cigarettes and their vapour. Talk to your local stop smoking service for the best advice.

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?

- 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. Ask anyone who wishes to smoke to go outside.
- Smoking in a car with your baby can be very harmful. It is now illegal to smoke in a car or other vehicle with any children under the age of 18 present. If you need to smoke take breaks and smoke outside of the vehicle.
- 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 be beneficial if you cannot quit altogether