

The ill-effects of cigarettes, alcohol and other drugs on both the pregnant mother and the unborn child have been well-documented. Use of these items is obviously highly discouraged as it can lead to premature birth, miscarriage, stillbirth, low birth weight, mental retardation and dependence of the newborn baby on drugs or alcohol. The effects of each drug are outlined in detail in this article.

Alcohol and Drug Use During Pregnancy

Cigarettes



Cigarette smoking poses a serious threat to the well being of your baby. Mothers that smoke have smaller babies than mothers who do not smoke. Smoking is also associated with a greater incidence of miscarriage, prematurity, stillbirth, and death of the baby soon after birth. According to congressional testimony of members of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, nearly fourteen thousand prenatal deaths per year are attributable to smoking by pregnant women. Further smoking by mothers has been shown to be associated with impaired intellectual and physical in their children.

Still, if you have always smoked it may be difficult to stop during pregnancy. If you cannot stop entirely, just cutting down is helpful since the harmful effects of smoking are close related.

The following tips may help you cut down or quit smoking.

1. Cut down on the number of cigarettes you smoke each day. Try to continue to reduce the number of cigarettes a little more each week.
2. Cut each cigarette in half and smoke only the half with the filter.
3. Choose a brand that is lowest in tar and nicotine.
4. Take fewer puffs on each cigarette you smoke.
5. Use a water filter, which can be purchased at the drugstore.

BABY GIFTS & GIFT BASKETS

Various laws and initiatives have been introduced not only in the US, but in other countries around the world to discourage alcohol, smoking and drug use during pregnancy. In the US, nearly 200 women have been prosecuted for child abuse related to in-utero harm during pregnancy.

[Baby Gifts and Gift Baskets](#) provides timely and practical information for new moms, as well as gift ideas for pregnancy, baby showers, and to celebrate birth:

New Baby Gift Ideas

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- [Teddy Bears & Plush](#)
- [Christmas Baby Gifts](#)
- [Easter Baby Gifts](#)
- [Baby Shower Favors](#)
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- [Baby Shower Games](#)
- [Invites & Thank You](#)
- [Shower Centerpieces](#)
- [Baby Baptism Favors](#)
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- [Baby Shower Tableware](#)
- [Pregnancy Congratulations](#)
- [Gifts Ideas for Mom](#)
- [Gift Ideas for Dad](#)
- [New Sibling Gifts](#)
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6. Consider entering a program designed to help you quit. The American Lung Association can help you find one.

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If you cut down on your smoking or quit altogether during your pregnancy, try not to resume the habit after having your baby—children of smokers have been shown to have a greater susceptibility to respiratory diseases.

Marijuana

Marijuana use has been associated with pulmonary cancer. It has been shown to have negative effects on memory and can cause menstrual irregularities.

Studies in animals have shown that the active ingredient in marijuana crosses the placenta and accumulates in the fetus. Effects on the offspring include intra-uterine growth retardation, low birth weight, and changes in secondary sex characteristics. In humans, precipitate labor [which ends with rapid expulsion of the fetus]; prolonged labor, low birth weight, prematurity and a greater risk of fetal distress have been associated with marijuana use.

Cocaine

Cocaine has profound effects on the mother and her fetus. It causes an increase in maternal heart rate, constriction of the blood vessels of the placenta, allowing less blood to reach the fetus; increased secretion of stress hormones, which cause constriction of uterine blood vessels and increased uterine contractility.

It has been difficult for researchers to isolate the effects of cocaine since so many users take others as well. However, cocaine use is also thought to be related to a high incidence of spontaneous abortion and to placenta abruption. Infants whose mothers use cocaine have a difficult time adjusting to environmental stimuli after birth and may be addicted to the drug.

Alcohol

Heavy drinking during pregnancy [more than five or six drinks daily] puts the baby at risk for fetal alcohol syndrome. Affected babies are born with physical malformations, including microcephaly [abnormally small head], certain heart defects and often subsequent mental retardation.

Even moderate [one or two drinks per day] and social [three or four drinks per day] drinking have been associated with problems. Some research points to a higher miscarriage rate among women who drink moderately. Other studies associate this level of drinking with a more frequent occurrence of birth defects and lower birth weights.

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No safe level of alcohol has been established yet. As a result it is probably best to take a cautious approach to alcohol consumption by abstaining or drinking very little and very infrequently. Probably the best way to handle social situations is to choose a non-alcoholic substitute, such as tomato juice, sparkling water, or fruit juice.

Other Medications and Drugs

Pregnancy is a time for prudent use of drugs. Since no drug has been proved safe for the unborn child, and some of the drugs have been proved unsafe, you will want to be cautious about the medications you take. Drugs and medication include any of the over the counter remedies you may buy as well as prescriptions authorized by your doctor. Your doctor can help you to decide when medications are indicated for you during pregnancy.