

SMOKING HARMS UNBORN BABIES

Smoking during pregnancy reduces the growth and health of babies and increases the risks of a number of complications and illnesses for both the mother and the baby/ Babies born to women who smoke during pregnancy have a greater chance of premature birth, low birth weight, still birth, and infant mortality. Smoking during pregnancy can also affect the development of babies' lungs which increases the risk for many health problems.

Nicotine and other chemicals in tobacco smoke are passed onto the baby through the placenta. Nicotine causes the blood vessels to constrict which decreases the amount of oxygen going to the unborn baby and is an important contributor to low birth weight. Low birth rate is a leading cause of infant death and an important risk factor for a number of health problems and complications in infancy and childhood. Smoking during any stage of pregnancy increases the risk of premature birth. Mothers who smoke also pass nicotine onto their babies through their breast milk.

Mothers who smoke are 50% more likely to have a stillborn baby compared to mothers who do not smoke. Babies born to mothers who smoke before and after birth are three times more likely to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

[Source: Australian Government, Department of Health and Ageing]