

# smoking

Smoking is linked to many serious health problems for women. These include heart disease, lung cancer, emphysema and stroke. If you smoke during pregnancy, your fetus is exposed to more than 2,000 harmful chemicals with each puff. You also lower the amount of oxygen and nourishment that reaches your developing baby. No amount of smoking is safe, especially early in pregnancy.

Smoking during the first days and weeks after conception—when the organs are forming—can cause damage to the developing baby that lasts a lifetime. Also, if you're trying to get pregnant, smoking may make it harder.

Whether or not you are planning a pregnancy, you should quit smoking. If you've tried before and failed, try again. Most people who try to quit need to keep trying before they succeed. If you can't quit, at least cut down.

It's best to stop smoking before you become pregnant. If you smoke while you are pregnant:

- You are more likely to have a miscarriage or stillbirth.
- Your baby could be born too small or too soon. Babies born too small may have breathing and other health problems.
- Your baby may have learning and behavior problems in childhood.
- Your baby is at increased risk of dying from crib death (sudden infant death syndrome). This illness causes a baby who seems healthy to die without any warning.

keep in mind...

- **Your doctor or other health care professional can help you develop a plan to stop smoking.**
- **The California Smoker's Helpline offers free one-on-one telephone counseling in six languages. They also offer brochures and referrals to local services. Call (800) NO-BUTTS.**
- **Some people like to join stop-smoking groups. You can get a referral to a local group from:**
  - **The American Cancer Society, (800) ACS-2345 (Spanish service available)**
  - **The American Lung Association at (800) LUNGUSA (Spanish service available)**
- **Some people prefer to quit on their own. You can get a self-help guide from the American Cancer Society or the American Lung Association.**
- **Nicotine gum or patches often help heavy smokers quit.**
- **Even if you don't smoke, the smoke from someone else's cigarette can hurt your health and the health of your unborn baby. Stay away from places where people are smoking.**

You may be surprised to learn that more than 60 percent of all pregnancies in California are not planned. It may also be news that many birth defects and other newborn health problems occur in the first few weeks after conception—when you may not even know you're pregnant.

A baby's health is strongly linked to the mother's health before pregnancy. That's another important reason for you to stay healthy. Whether or not you're planning to get pregnant, it's important to follow these guidelines:

- **Take a multi-vitamin with at least 400 micrograms of folic acid every day.**
- **Ask your doctor about your risk of diabetes.**
- **If you smoke, stop.**
- **Have a GYN exam annually.**
- **If you are being hurt by a partner or someone else, call a local shelter or crisis hot line. Also tell a health care worker you trust.**
- **Eat a variety of whole grains, fruits and vegetables every day and lower your intake of fat.**