



# Smoke Signals

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## **Preconception planning:**

### **Take care now for a healthy baby later**

Preparing for pregnancy is an excellent reason to improve your health. To give your future baby the best possible start in life:

**Don't smoke.** Smoking decreases a woman's chance of conceiving and can reduce a man's sperm count. Women who smoke during pregnancy tend to have babies with lower birth weights than nonsmokers, and these babies may have developmental problems. Their babies are also three times as likely to die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) as are the babies of nonsmokers. In addition, smokers have a higher incidence of tubal (ectopic) pregnancy and stillbirths.

It's very important that both of you stop smoking. Regular exposure to secondhand smoke may reduce fetal growth and therefore increase your chances of having a low-birth-weight baby. At birth, low-birth-weight babies are more likely to have low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) and trouble maintaining their body temperature (hypothermia). Low birth weight also increases a baby's risk of chronic disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, mental retardation and learning problems.

Smoking is an addiction and can be difficult to stop. If you're ready to stop, ask your doctor for help. This is especially important if you're interested in using products such as nicotine patches or gum. Your doctor will be eager to help you stop smoking anytime, but there are more tools available before you get pregnant.

### **Find Your Reason to Quit Smoking**

It's not all doom and gloom - we want to give you inspiration. The minute you stop smoking, your body starts to recover and you become instantly richer!

Each person must find the reason that convinces him or her to quit. For some, that reason is financial, for others it's medical, but each successful former smoker knows his or her own personal inspiration. Make a list of the reasons why you want to quit. Keep that list available so you can look at it when you have a nicotine craving.

## **Myths Debunked**

**Smoking looks sexy** - Or at least, that's what the tobacco industry would like you to think. Well, it may look glamorous now, but just wait. Smoking causes deep wrinkles, and yellow teeth are a by-product of years of smoking. Smoking also contributes to osteoporosis, or thinning of the bones, which can cause stooped posture and broken bones — not a pretty picture. In fact, women who smoke reach menopause at a younger age than non-smokers. And, as non-smokers can tell you, kissing someone who smokes is not tasty, let alone sexy.

**I'll gain weight** - You might, but there are a lot less destructive ways to lose the weight. Most people gain no more than 10 pounds. Planning a healthy diet and increasing your activity level will help keep off the pounds. Some of the medications used to help quit smoking can also assist in delaying weight gain.

**I'll quit when I'm pregnant** - It may be harder to get pregnant if you smoke, because smoking is a major cause of infertility. Women who smoke have an increased chance of miscarriage and complications during pregnancy. Also, it might take you a couple of attempts to actually stop smoking, so your chances of success with quitting are better the earlier you start.

**One cigarette won't hurt** - Yes, it will. Every cigarette you smoke takes minutes off your life, and keeps you in a nicotine-addicted state. And, if you smoke around other people, you're hurting them, especially if they have asthma, heart disease, allergies, or are very young.

**I'm young—I'll quit in the next few years** - Nearly all adult women who smoke started as teenagers. Most teenagers who smoke daily don't expect to continue smoking, but most are still smoking five years later.

**I smoke light cigarettes, so it's not so bad** - According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, these so-called "light" cigarettes have the same ingredients as regular cigarettes, including lead, ammonia, benzene, DDT, butane gas, carbon monoxide, arsenic, and polonium 210.