



## What Are the Consequences of Smoking During Pregnancy?

Smoking during pregnancy increases risks of:

- Miscarriage;
- stillborn babies;
- complications during pregnancy and delivery;
- premature birth;
- low birth-weight babies;
- babies who die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

### Effects on the Mother During Pregnancy

Complications during pregnancy and delivery increase the health risk for both the mother and the baby. The placenta may detach itself prematurely from the uterus (abruptio placenta). The placenta may also block the cervix, the “exit door” for the baby (placenta previa). These two pregnancy complications, which are associated with smoking, lead to heavy bleeding and may result in cesarean delivery. Smoking during pregnancy may also provoke a miscarriage.

### Effects on the Baby Before Birth

Smoking has a direct effect on the growth of the fetus. Babies born to women who smoke are more likely to have a low birth weight. This is due to the fact that less oxygen is carried by the mother’s blood to the fetus. Smoking can double the risk that the baby’s weight at birth will be less than 2500 grams. Low birth weight babies are less likely to be born healthy babies and have increased risks of illness and death during birth and infancy.

### Effects on the Baby After Birth

Breastfeeding helps to protect the baby against infections and provides nutritional benefits. Smoking can lower both the quantity of breast milk and its quality. Nicotine and other toxic chemicals are passed from the breast milk of smoking mothers directly to their babies, which may irritate the baby.

Infants of smoking mothers have 5 times the risks of SIDS that infants of non-smoking mothers, and paternal smoking also increases risks of SIDS.

These last two effects result from a combination of parental smoking during pregnancy as well as after birth.

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