




# Give your baby a breather – Quit smoking

Help and advice on quitting  
smoking during pregnancy



Freephone  
1800 201 203  
Freetext Text QUIT  
to 50100  
[www.quit.ie](http://www.quit.ie)



Being pregnant is a great reason for giving up smoking – one decision that benefits two lives. If you need motivation, this leaflet tells you exactly how smoking while pregnant can affect you and your baby's health.

This leaflet provides the basic advice on how to give up smoking and also outlines the free professional help you can access across Ireland.

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## Why should I quit?

If quitting smoking is the single most important thing you can do to protect your own health, imagine how important it is for your baby.

So if you are pregnant, or thinking about getting pregnant, you've never had a better reason to quit smoking.

### **Remember, you'll be quitting for two.**

- When you smoke, you breathe in nicotine, tar and carbon monoxide.
- You also breathe in around 7,000 other chemicals, many of them poisonous, such as arsenic, ammonia and benzene. All these poisons get into your baby's bloodstream from yours.
- When you smoke, the tar and other chemicals that build up in your lungs can cause cancer.
- Smoking cuts down the amount of oxygen and nutrients that get to your baby. Your baby needs these to grow and develop. Babies born to women who smoke have a greater risk of infections and other health problems.

## What are the risks if I smoke during pregnancy?

- If you smoke while pregnant, you are much more likely to miscarry.
- You are more likely to experience bleeding, sickness and other complications during pregnancy.
- Your baby is more likely to be born prematurely, ill or underweight, and to have a greater risk of cot death.
- About one in 10 stillbirths are caused by smoking.
- All these risks have been proven by medical research.



## What if I'm already pregnant?

Quitting smoking at any stage in your pregnancy is good for you and your baby. It's never too late to start protecting your own and your baby's health.

As soon as you quit smoking, the chemicals you've taken in through cigarettes will start to clear from your body, and your baby will be able to get more oxygen.



# How does smoking affect my baby?

When you smoke a cigarette, all the poisons you breathe in get into your bloodstream, and from there into your baby's blood.

This puts your baby at risk of:

## Low birth weight

Smoking reduces the amount of oxygen and nutrients that get to your baby. Your baby needs these to grow and develop. Babies born to women who smoke have a greater risk of birth defects and other health problems.

## Cot death

If you smoke during pregnancy or after your baby is born, your baby is up to three times more likely to die from cot death. Some studies say that one in four of all cot deaths is caused by smoking.

## Asthma, wheezing and chest infections

Smoking while pregnant will damage the development of your baby's lungs. Babies born to women who smoke are twice as likely to develop asthma. They are also more likely to have other problems, such as wheezing and chest infections.

## **Passive smoking**

You need to protect your baby from passive smoking. Make your home a smoke-free zone. Even second-hand cigarette smoke can trigger asthma attacks and chest infections. Ask your family and friends not to smoke around you or your baby.

## **Nose and throat infections**

Cigarette smoke damages the lining of the baby's nose and throat, allowing more bacteria to stick there. This increases the chances of infection.

## **Ear infections**

Babies who breathe in cigarette smoke are more likely to get middle ear infections and 'glue ear', which can cause partial deafness.

## **Colic**

Babies whose mothers smoke are twice as likely to suffer from colic. Babies with colic cry a lot and are difficult to settle.

## **Meningitis**

If you smoke, your baby is much more likely to get meningitis. Meningitis is an infection of the brain which can cause serious illness or death.



## Quit smoking and save money

Imagine all the things you could do with the money you spend on cigarettes.

With a baby on the way, there are lots of things you're going to need. Just a few weeks of not smoking could save you enough to buy a new cot, pram or lots of cute baby clothes. Quit for a few months, and you could save enough for something special for your baby's first birthday.

Visit [quit.hse.ie/I-Want-to-Quit/cost/](https://quit.hse.ie/I-Want-to-Quit/cost/) to find out just how much you could save.



# I think I'd find it too hard to quit

Smoking is highly addictive. Not surprisingly, many people find it difficult to quit. Yet, every year thousands manage to quit for good. And you can too.

You may have already tried to quit. If you have, that's a great sign. Research shows that the more times you try to quit smoking, the more likely you are to succeed. Being pregnant is the best reason for quitting smoking – one decision benefits two lives.

## Help is at hand

You are twice as likely to quit for good if you get the right support from a trained stop smoking advisor or other health professional such as your family doctor (GP), midwife, practice nurse, public health nurse or pharmacist.

[QUIT.ie](http://QUIT.ie) has lots of information, advice and a really useful [QUIT plan](#) with daily emails and texts to help you on your quit journey.

If you want to quit now or have a chat about quitting, freephone **1800 201 203** or freetext **QUIT to 50100**. The service is non judgemental and supportive. We understand what you are going through and will help and support you even if you have a slip along the way.

# Getting ready to quit

Try writing down your reasons to keep on smoking and the reasons why you want to quit. And keep your list close by, as a reminder.

<b>What I enjoy about smoking</b> Example – It helps me relax.	<b>Why I want to stop smoking</b> Example – I worry about the damage to my health and my baby's health.

Another useful tip is to think about where, when and why you smoke, and keep a diary of your smoking habits for a few days. This helps you to think about your smoking pattern and make plans to break it.

Some women told us why they are worried about quitting:

**“Smoking helps me cope with stress.”**

Smoking causes stress. This is because nicotine is a stimulant. When your nicotine level falls, you feel tense because your body is craving more nicotine. Smoking only makes you feel less stressed because it boosts your nicotine level again and relieves the craving temporarily.

**“I’m worried about withdrawal symptoms.”**

Nicotine is a powerful drug and it takes time to clear it from your body. Distract yourself when you get a craving for a cigarette and the feeling will pass in a few minutes. Other symptoms, such as coughing or being more irritable, will only last a few weeks at most and they won’t harm you or your baby.

Nicotine replacement therapy may help you with withdrawal symptoms – you can discuss this with your stop-smoking advisor, midwife or doctor.

# Quitting

## Quit rather than cut down

Cutting down instead of quitting is likely to change the way you smoke for the worse. When people smoke fewer cigarettes a day, they tend to inhale more deeply. This means the same amount of chemicals will be affecting your baby. For this reason, it's much better for your baby if you quit completely.

The best way to quit is to pick a definite date to quit smoking and get the support you need. The sooner, the better for you and your baby's health. The earlier in your pregnancy you quit the better, but quitting at any stage will benefit you and your baby.

## My quit date is:

## Getting through the first few days

When it comes to quitting, there's no magic wand – but there are lots of things you can do to help yourself to quit. Here are some:

- Change your routine.
- Avoid places, people or activities that make you feel like smoking.
- Brush your teeth or chew sugar-free gum if you usually smoke after a meal.
- Make your home a smoke-free area.

## Learn to deal with your cravings

When you feel a craving for a cigarette, remember the '5 Ds'.

- **D**elay for at least 3 to 5 minutes and the craving will pass.
- **D**rink a glass of water or fruit juice.
- **D**istract yourself.
- **D**eep breaths – breathe slowly and deeply.
- **D**on't **d**well on it.

## Stay busy

- Keep your hands and mouth busy.
- Chew sugar-free gum.
- Snack on fruit and vegetables.
- Drink water.
- Doodle with a pen or pencil (or just chew on the end).
- Rub your tummy.
- Rub on some stretch-mark oil.
- Go for a walk.

## Take it one day at a time

Concentrate on getting through each hour initially then each day without smoking.

Don't worry about how you'll manage without cigarettes for the rest of your life.

Concentrate on staying smoke free for short periods at first until you become more confident as a non smoker.

## Withdrawal symptoms

Remember, the below symptoms are a positive sign that your body is recovering from the harmful effects of smoking. And the good news is that symptoms rarely last more than three weeks.

- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Craving for a cigarette
- Tingling sensation in toes or fingers
- Lack of concentration
- Changes in sleep pattern
- Feeling hungrier than usual
- Coughing and bringing up phlegm
- Feeling more sensitive than usual.

## Consider Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) helps people to quit smoking by reducing their withdrawal symptoms from the lack of the drug nicotine. NRT doesn't contain any of the tar, carbon monoxide or other harmful chemicals found in cigarettes, and it doesn't cause cancer. A short course of NRT is safer for you and your baby than continuing to smoke. NRT is not a magic cure, but you are twice as likely to succeed in quitting if you use it.

**Remember, it is important to talk to your doctor, midwife or pharmacist before using NRT when you are pregnant.**

# E-cigarettes and pregnancy

## Using e-cigarettes to stop smoking

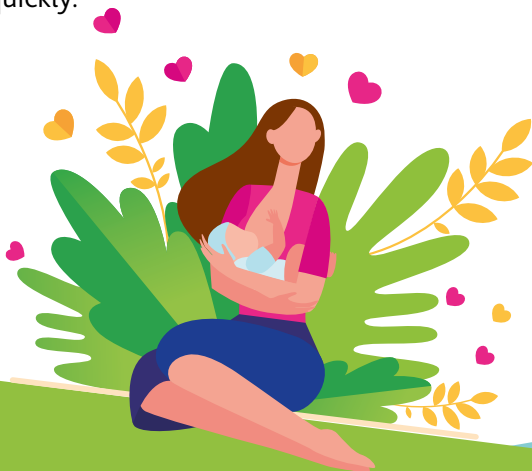
E-cigarettes are still fairly new, so we don't yet know how safe they are for you or your developing baby. Because of this, we don't recommend e-cigarettes during pregnancy, but we can recommend other safe supports like NRT above to help you quit smoking during pregnancy.

## Staying quit

Once you have stopped smoking, keep reminding yourself why you have quit.

Quitting is a great achievement, with huge benefits for you and your baby.

There will be times when you are tempted to give in and have a cigarette, but if you stay strong and focussed, the moment will pass quickly.






## Learn how to deal with temptations

- Stay busy. Boredom can make smoking seem more important to you than it really is.
- Get good at relaxing. Having a cigarette provides a break for many smokers, a few minutes for themselves. Find a different way to take a break, making yourself a cup of tea or reading a magazine.
- Reward yourself and use some of the money you would normally spend on cigarettes to buy yourself something nice.
- Don't let your mind trick you with thoughts like "one cigarette won't hurt" or "I'll just have one to prove I've kicked it". Recognise these for what they are – just excuses to have a cigarette. Smoking even one cigarette can stimulate nicotine cravings again. Stay strong and don't give in.
- Staying smoke free after your baby is born will protect you and your child's health. Children who grow up in non-smoking homes are less likely to become smokers, so you will be setting a good example.

And if you do have a cigarette, see it as a temporary slip-up, not a failure. Call Quit on **1800 201 203** for encouragement. We'll help you to remember why you want to quit smoking, manage future cravings and plan how to give quitting another go.



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# Help and advice

## You can QUIT and we can help!

You're twice as likely to quit for good with our help.

### Contact the HSE QUIT Team

**Freephone:** 1800 201 203

**Tweet:** @HSEQuitTeam

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/HSEQuit](http://www.facebook.com/HSEQuit)

**Web:** [www.quit.ie](http://www.quit.ie)

**Freetext:** text QUIT to 50100

### Face-to-face clinics

We offer quit-smoking clinics and groups in many areas. You can find contact details on [www.quit.ie/clinics](http://www.quit.ie/clinics) or contact the QUIT team on Freephone 1800 201 203.

### Health professionals

Your family doctor (GP), midwife, practice nurse, public health nurse or pharmacist can all offer advice and support when you are quitting smoking.

