

## PATIENT INFORMATION

# Supporting Smoke-free Pregnancies

Quitting smoking is difficult for most people, but if you are pregnant or planning to get pregnant, it is the most important thing that you can do to improve the health and safety of your baby as babies are harmed when the mother smokes or is exposed to the smoke of others.

Each puff of cigarette smoke contains over 4000 harmful chemicals at least 70 of which are known to cause cancer. These chemicals enter into your blood stream and are also then passed across the placenta to your baby. Smoke also contains Carbon Monoxide (CO) which is a poisonous chemical which significantly reduces levels of the vital oxygen that your baby needs to develop.

If you smoke during pregnancy you have a higher risk of:

- Miscarriage
- Ectopic pregnancy
- Stillbirth (increased by third)
- Poor growth – a baby that does not reach its full growth potential due to smoking is likely to have ongoing health problems as a baby, and throughout life.
- Your baby developing with facial deformities such as cleft lip and palate.
- Premature labour
- Placental abruption – this is bleeding caused by the placenta coming away from the wall of the uterus, and can be life threatening to you and your baby.
- Increased risk of birth complications due to reduced oxygen supply through labour
- Health problems for baby e.g. asthma, serious chest infections, ear infections
- Behavioral problems – children who are exposed to tobacco smoke in pregnancy are more likely to have ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) and to perform poorly at school.
- Sudden Infant Death is three times more likely if you smoke in pregnancy.

## **QUITTING SMOKING REDUCES ALL OF THESE RISKS – CUTTING DOWN DOES NOT**

There are no 'safe' levels of smoking but using Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is safe during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Using an e-cigarette or vape is also significantly safer (at least 95%) than continuing smoke. We support hundreds of

women and families each year to quit, and we can provide the help and support you need to quit smoking, and improve the health of you and your family. At each appointment your midwife will discuss tobacco addiction both for yourself and any household members, and offer to test for levels of Carbon Monoxide which is most commonly inhaled from cigarette smoke but can also come from a faulty boiler or gas appliance. It's never too late to quit but the sooner you stop smoking the greater the benefits and the better it is for your baby's safety.

If you do not smoke but others smoke around you, your baby is still exposed to harm as only 15% of the harmful chemicals are visible in the cigarette smoke you see and smell. These chemicals are breathed in and also fall to the ground covering clothes and other surfaces in the home. We know that this type of exposure still has significant increased risks of stillbirth, premature birth or their growth and health being negatively affected. Therefore, it is really important that you do not let people smoke inside your home or car, or near you even in outside spaces.

If you smoke in pregnancy, or have recently quit, you will be referred to a Tobacco Addiction Advisor who will contact you to offer you support to cope with cravings and withdrawal symptoms and can prescribe NRT. They will offer you 1-2-1 support, typically for 12 weeks. It may be difficult to begin with, but 4 out of 5 pregnant women and people who manage to stop smoking for 28 days, quit for good!

Your partner, family and friends can support you by quitting too – the support is available to everyone.

### Carbon Monoxide Testing

Carbon Monoxide (CO) levels are higher in women and people who smoke, or who are exposed to tobacco smoke. CO is a poisonous gas that restricts the amount of Oxygen that reaches your baby in the womb. Your midwife will offer to test your CO levels at each antenatal contact to measure your exposure to tobacco smoke.

### Smokefree Site

Torbay Hospital is a Smokefree Site so if you are a smoker, it is important that you prepare for your stay with us. While you are admitted we cannot support you to leave the ward to smoke. If you are admitted to the unit, it is because there is a clinical need for you and/or your baby to have inpatient care. We are unable to provide that care if you are off the ward, and off site. You should never leave the ward with your baby unattended and we are unable to provide childcare. Leaving your baby unattended could be considered a safeguarding risk and if you are found to be smoking on site, security will be informed.

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For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.

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*Working with you, for you*