

Smoking while pregnant

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Smoking During Pregnancy Pregnancy is one of the most miraculous, exciting, and scariest times in a woman's life. It is a time to grow and bond with a child growing inside her, but what some women do not know is that choices she makes while pregnant can affect her unborn baby in negative ways. Teratogens which are "any environmental agent that causes damage during the prenatal period" (Berk 65) are a frightening reality that every new mother needs to be aware of. Teratogens include drinking alcohol, taking prescription and non prescription drugs, radiation, pollution and many other things a woman might ingest or be exposed to while pregnant. One of the most common things woman do while pregnant and do not realize the effects it can have on her unborn child is smoking tobacco. Tobacco smoking while pregnant can have harmful effects on an unborn child in the womb, after birth, and many years later when the child is older. Smoking tobacco has been linked with many of the complications that a normal, healthy woman experiences during pregnancy. If the mother smokes cigarettes while pregnant she greatly increases her chances of a miscarriage. "Smoking during pregnancy-particularly beyond the fourth month-is hazardous. It has been linked to some 115, 000 miscarriages... a year" (Eisenberg 54). Miscarriage is not the only danger to a developing fetus and the mother. Smoking while pregnant is also linked to major complications during pregnancy such as vaginal bleeding, abnormal placenta implantation, premature placenta detachment, and early delivery (Eisenberg 54). Just knowing of all these dangers that can happen during pregnancy is something every new and expecting mother should be aware of, not only for her own health, but for the health of her baby. When a pregnant woman chooses to

smoke throughout her pregnancy she than has to not only be concerned of the complications she and her baby may experience during her three trimesters, but also of the complications her and her baby may have to face during and shortly after birth. The birth of ones child should be a joyous experience that is remembered and cherished throughout ones life. A smoking mother may find it harder to take part in that joy, as smoking during pregnancy can have a negative outcome on her new born baby. New born babies, born to a mother who smoked are seen to be " less attentive to sounds, display more muscle tension, are more excitable when touched and visually stimulated, and more often have colic" (Berk 67). It is hard enough for a new mother to learn how to care for her new baby through the everyday challenges of parenthood, but raising a child with these problems after birth can make it that much more stressful for a new mother. Babies born to smoking mothers are also " more likely to suffer from apnea (breathing lapses) and are twice as likely to die from SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome) as babies of nonsmokers" (Eisenberg 54). This fact found in the book *What To Expect When Your Expecting* can be a terrifying thought for mothers, because no parent wants to think that something like smoking during pregnancy can have such a negative outcome on her babies life. There are also many other problems associated with babies whose mothers smoke. Problems with their babies at birth, such as low birth weight and asthma in infants, but there are also a majority of other problems that can develop after the child is much older. There have been many studies done with children that had mothers who smoked when they were pregnant. Many of the results mostly are mostly conclusive on the same arguments. It was

found that children of mothers who smoke, tested at school age, are found to have shorter stature, increased learning difficulties, increased hyperactivity and behavioral problems, as well as a decreased academic performance (Sears 1). These findings are shocking and hopefully will lead to many expectant mothers to cease smoking. Many mothers only wish the best for their children's futures, but children of mothers who smoked when they were pregnant generally have a harder time succeeding due to the average of lower academic scores and learning difficulties. Also, when a child is shorter than the rest of the children his age because he had a mother who smoked, it becomes harder for them to feel comfortable with themselves, causing them to be self-conscious throughout their lives. It is not hard to come to the conclusion that smoking during pregnancy can have a negative outcome on the ability for babies to live in the womb, after birth, and much later in that child's life, but for smoking women who are planning to become pregnant there are some things that they can do to lower or erase the chances of these effects on their babies. " Women who stop smoking during the first trimester can lower the risk of premature and low-birth-weight infants" (Dangers 1). Therefore, all hope is not lost if a woman is a smoker and becomes pregnant. It is best if an expecting mother quits smoking when she first has the slightest feeling that she may be pregnant, or better quits smoking before she plans to conceive.