

Skylar pass from a  
pregnant woman to



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Skylar Lamke1/21/2018HDFS 225Week 2 AssignmentDear Nora, During this time of pregnancy there are many factors to ensure not only your own health, but the health of your unborn child. One very important thing to consider is teratogens, which are factors that cause birth defects. One of these factors is using nicotine during pregnancy. A common thought is that smoking a couple cigarettes while pregnant is fine. The truth is that “nicotine is only one of 4, 000 toxic chemicals that can pass from a pregnant woman to her fetus”.

This is huge! There are thousands of toxic chemicals and the one that can directly harm your baby is at the tips of your fingers. This means that the toxins that you are putting into your body are going straight to your baby. “Nicotine causes blood vessels to narrow, so less oxygen and fewer nutrients reach the fetus. Nicotine also damages a fetus’s brain and lungs.

This damage is permanent” (The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 2017). You are denying your baby many of the vital things it needs while it is growing in you when you choose to smoke while pregnant. Another problem that can take place when you smoke while pregnant is, “preterm birth, which is birth that occurs before 37 weeks of pregnancy. Babies that are born too early may not be fully developed. They may be smaller than babies born to nonsmokers, and they are more likely to have colic (with uncontrollable crying). These babies are at increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). They also are more likely to develop asthma and obesity in childhood” (The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 2017).

This is a lot of risk to take on, simply by smoking a few cigarettes. Another teratogen is alcohol. “Alcohol can interfere with the normal growth of a fetus and cause birth defects. When a woman drinks during pregnancy, her fetus can develop physical, intellectual, behavioral, and learning disabilities that can last a lifetime. The most severe disorder is fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). FAS can cause growth problems, intellectual disability, behavioral problems, and abnormal facial features” (The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 2017). These problems will affect your child their whole life. Use of other substances such as heroin, cocaine, methamphetamines, and prescription drugs can also cause major adverse effects on your unborn child.

“Different drugs may affect the fetus in different ways. Using illegal drugs early in pregnancy can cause birth defects and miscarriage. During the later weeks of pregnancy, illegal drug use can interfere with the growth of the fetus and cause preterm birth and fetal death” (The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 2017). One more teratogen to be aware of is a medication called, phenytoin, it is used to treat epilepsy (seizure disorder). If phenytoin is taken by the pregnant mother in the first trimester, there is approximately a 5-10 percent chance that the baby could be born with a combination of birth defects known as the Fetal Hydantoin Syndrome.

Babies with this syndrome may be born with some of the following health problems: growth deficiencies, developmental delay, cleft palate, heart defects, genitourinary abnormalities, and abnormalities of the fingers and nails. Phenytoin crosses the placenta in such a way that the developing unborn child receives a much higher dose of the medication than the mother

is taking (the drug is metabolized differently by the fetus). Despite these risks, seizure control during pregnancy is very important. Therefore, when a woman with epilepsy is planning a pregnancy, it is important for her to meet with both her neurologist and her obstetrician, before conception, to discuss the specific treatment to be used to control seizures while pregnant (Stanford Children's Health, 2018).

As the mother of your child, even though he or she is still growing and living within you, you hold the responsibility to take care of your well-being for your future child. Because the things that you put into your body or expose yourself to at this stage can affect your child in drastic ways. You hold the power to make good choices for you and your baby that is growing inside of you.