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Smoking and Pregnancy

It is estimated that between 10-18% of patients smoke during their pregnancy. It seems everyone knows that smoking can lead to lower birth weights, but is that all? And, is having a smaller baby really that bad?

According to the March of Dimes, smoking doubles the risk of having a low birth weight baby (<5.5 lbs at term). Smoking also increases the risk of preterm labor. Preemies and low birth weight babies are more likely to have complications in the newborn period and long-term disabilities, such as cerebral palsy.

In addition, smoking can lead to several complications that most people do not know about. Smokers have a higher risk of miscarriage and stillbirth. They also have a higher risk of placental problems, such as "placenta previa" and "placental abruption". Placenta previa is a condition in which the placenta implants over the cervix. Placental abruption is a complication in which the placenta separates prematurely from the uterus, thus abruptly disrupting the supply of oxygen to the baby. Babies can die from these complications, and the mothers may suffer from life-threatening bleeding.

Smoking may also increase the risk of certain birth defects in newborns, specifically heart defects. The risk is directly proportional to the number of cigarettes a woman smokes.

Second hand smoke can also cause problems for newborns. They are more likely to have respiratory problems such as asthma and pneumonia, and have an increased risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).

In summary, a woman will never have more motivation to stop smoking than when she is pregnant. Take advantage of this time to give up the habit altogether! A woman's ability to quit is greatly influenced by the people around her. She is more likely to quit smoking if her partner quits also, and if she is getting support and encouragement from other family members and friends.