



## SMOKING AND PREGNANCY

Louisiana has one of the country's highest rates of low birth weight, babies who weigh less than 5.5 pounds at birth. In 2002, more than 6,700 babies born in this state were low birth weight. Smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke during pregnancy are known contributors to prematurity and low birth weight – both of which yield small, fragile babies at risk of dying in their first year of life and very likely to experience health and developmental problems later on. Evidence shows that smoking during pregnancy is also associated with mental retardation and other birth defects.

### The Facts About Smoking & Secondhand Smoke Exposure During Pregnancy

- Infants born to mothers who smoke weigh less than other infants. Low birth weight babies tend to be very sick and fragile, at risk of dying in their first year.
- In 2002, smoking during pregnancy was responsible for nearly 1 in 5 low birth weight babies in Louisiana.
- 33.4% of all maternal smokers in the U.S. fall into the age groups of either 15-19 or 20-24, and 18.2% of them are between ages 18-19.
- More than 50% of women who try to quit smoking during pregnancy are successful, but approximately 70% return to smoking afterward.
- Secondhand smoke exposure increases the chance that infants will die of SIDS; have asthma; and/or develop ear infections, pneumonia and/or behavioral problems.
- Stress related to new motherhood and the “baby blues,” or worries about losing pregnancy weight cause women to return to smoking.

*Partners for Healthy Babies offers these recommendations for pregnant women and their families:*

- If you are a smoker and are pregnant, try to quit. The 1-800-251-BABY helpline can help direct you to smoking cessation services.
- If you are pregnant and someone else in your household or family smokes, ask him or her not to smoke around you.
- Secondhand smoke is a known contributor to many complications during pregnancy.
- If you have trouble quitting, at least cut back. This does not eliminate your baby's risks of being born too early or too small, but can reduce them somewhat.
- Remember that quitting smoking during pregnancy is not enough. Staying quit after the baby is born is also important. Secondhand smoke is also a known risk factor for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, also known as SIDS or “crib death.” Don't let anyone smoke around your baby.

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