



# Women, Infants and Children

## Why shouldn't you use Tobacco?

The use of tobacco in the female population has been shown to increase the risk of cancer, heart and respiratory diseases, and reproductive disorders. More than 140,000 women die each year from smoking-related diseases--the most preventable cause of premature death in this country.

### TOBACCO USE AND WOMEN

- ▶ An estimated 67,000 women die each year from lung cancer, which has surpassed breast cancer as the leading cause of cancer deaths among women. These deaths are largely due to smoking.
- ▶ The lung cancer death rate among women has increased by more than 400% over the last 30 years and is continuing to increase.
- ▶ In addition to increasing the risk of lung cancer, tobacco use is a risk factor for cancers of the cervix, mouth, larynx, pharynx, esophagus, kidney, pancreas, bladder, stomach, rectum, liver, colon, skin, and uterus.
- ▶ Each year approximately 34,000 deaths from ischemic heart disease among women are attributed to smoking.
- ▶ In addition, about 8,000 deaths from stroke among women are attributed to smoking. Most of these deaths are in women who are past menopause; however, smoking increases the risk more in younger women than in older women.
- ▶ Tobacco use has a damaging effect on women's reproductive health. Smoking is associated with complications of pregnancy, early menopause, and reduced fertility.

### TOBACCO USE AND PREGNANCY

- ▶ An estimated 10% of pregnant Idaho women smoke throughout their pregnancies. According to the Office of the Surgeon General, smoking is probably the most important modifiable cause of poor pregnancy outcomes among women in the United States. Tobacco use is associated with an increased risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, preterm delivery, and infant death, and is a cause of low birth weight in infants.
- ▶ Recent estimates suggest that quitting smoking during pregnancy could prevent from 17% to 26% of cases of low birth weight in the United States. Tobacco use during pregnancy slows fetal growth, often causing babies to have health problems as a result of low birth weight.
- ▶ Research also suggests that infants are more likely to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) if their mothers smoke during and after pregnancy, compared to infants whose mothers do not smoke. The risk is somewhat less for infants whose mothers stop smoking during pregnancy and resume smoking after delivery.
- ▶ Tobacco use by mothers can also adversely affect children after birth. It's estimated that US mothers who smoke at least ten cigarettes a day cause from 8,000 - 26,000 new cases of asthma among their children, annually. In addition, each year between 200,000 and one million children with asthma have their condition worsened by exposure to "second-hand" smoke. Exposing an infant to second-hand smoke also increases the child's risk of pneumonia, bronchitis, and fluid in the middle ear. Breast milk of women who smoke has been found to contain nicotine, a highly addictive drug.
- ▶ Women who quit smoking tend to gain weight; however the health benefits of quitting are considerable, while health risks related to a small amount of weight gain are very minor. Research shows the average weight gain after quitting smoking is only about 5 pounds, which can be controlled through diet and exercise.

This information was adapted from the American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts and Figures 1998.  
It can be found on the web at <http://www.cancer.org/tobacco/women.html>

