

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

Smoking by the mother is considered to be one of the major risk factors for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS or cot death) ²³.

It is not known exactly what causes a baby to die from SIDS but recent research has indicated that SIDS has been found to be at least twice as likely among infants of women who smoke during pregnancy than among infants of women who do not smoke during pregnancy ¹.

The chemicals and nicotine in cigarettes result in a reduced blood flow through the blood vessels of the placenta. The decreased blood flow reduces the amount of oxygen the growing baby receives and it is thought that the long periods of reduced oxygen flow affects the normal development of the baby's central nervous system, which controls a baby's breathing ².

Current studies link SIDS deaths with both exposure of tobacco smoke to the unborn baby as well as through passive smoking in infants ².

Small children have very sensitive lungs and breathe at a faster rate than adults and their exposure to the chemicals in cigarettes is much higher than in adults.



One of the best ways to reduce the likelihood of a SIDS death is to quit smoking during pregnancy and to ensure the home is a smoke-free zone when there are infants and children living there.

For advice and support with quitting smoking call **13 QUIT (13 7848)** or speak with your health professional.

References

1. Laws PJ, Grayson N and Sullivan EA 2006. *Smoking and Pregnancy*. AIHW cat. No. Per 33. Sydney: AIHW National Perinatal Statistics Unit
2. NSW Department of Health (Ed.) 2006. *Background papers to the National clinical guidelines for the management of drug use during pregnancy, birth and the early development years of the newborn*. [NSW Department of Health](#), Sydney.