

[IMAGE]

More Reasons Not to Smoke During Pregnancy

For decades, women have been cautioned not to smoke while pregnant. Not only is smoking unhealthy for an expectant mother, it can cause a variety of problems for her developing child, ranging from low birth weight to asthma, learning disabilities and behavioral problems. New research has shown that smoking during pregnancy can cause severe physical deformities as well, and that the more a woman smokes while pregnant, the more likely she is to give birth to a child with excess, webbed or missing fingers and toes.

In the largest study of its kind, researchers examined the records of more than 6.8 million live births in the United States during 2001 and 2002. They found 5,171 children who were born with some type of digital anomaly, such as excess toes or webbed fingers, in which the mother smoked during pregnancy but did not suffer from other medical complications. When compared to a control group of normal births, the study authors found that pregnant women who smoked between one and 10 cigarettes per day increased the risk of having a child born with a toe or finger deformity by 29 percent. Smoking 11 to 20 cigarettes per day increased the risk 38 percent; smoking 21 or more cigarettes per day increased the risk 78 percent.

The sooner a mother stops smoking during her pregnancy, the better it will be for both her and her baby. If you currently smoke, it's not too late to talk to your doctor about ways to quit - or at least cut down - smoking while pregnant. For more information on ways to have a safe and healthy pregnancy, visit www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/women/pregnancy.

Man LX, Chang B. Maternal cigarette smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of having a child with a congenital digital anomaly. *Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery*, January 2006;117(1):301-308.

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