



How Health Care Professionals Can Help Pregnant Smokers Quit

Quitting smoking is the most important action a pregnant woman can take to ensure the health of her baby. The U. S. Surgeon General has reported that eliminating smoking during pregnancy could prevent 10% of all infant deaths and 12% of all deaths due to perinatal conditions. Health care professionals have an enormous opportunity to improve the health of mothers and their babies by helping pregnant smokers quit. An easy-to-implement, evidence-based counseling approach can double or even triple quit rates among pregnant smokers. This approach has been published by the U. S. Public Health Service in its *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence* Clinical Practice Guideline, and by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. The approach is effective for most pregnant smokers, including low-income women, the group most likely to smoke during pregnancy.

The “5 A’s” Counseling Method

The evidence-based intervention for providers to help their pregnant smokers quit is based on the following five steps:

ASK – 1 minute

Ask patient about smoking status.

- A. I have NEVER smoked, or have smoked LESS THAN 100 cigarettes in my lifetime.
- B. I stopped smoking BEFORE I found out I was pregnant, and I am not smoking now.
- C. I stopped smoking AFTER I found out I was pregnant, and I am not smoking now.
- D. I smoke some now, but I cut down on the number of cigarettes I smoke SINCE I found out I was pregnant.
- E. I smoke regularly now, about the same as BEFORE I found out I was pregnant.

ADVISE – 1 minute

Provide clear, strong advice to quit with personalized messages about the impact of smoking on mother and fetus.

ASSESS – 1 minute

Assess the willingness of the patient to make a quit attempt within the next 30 days.

ASSIST – 3 minutes +

Suggest and encourage the use of problem-solving methods and skills for cessation. Provide social support as part of the treatment. Arrange social support in the smoker's environment. Provide pregnancy-specific, self-help smoking cessation materials.

ARRANGE – 1 minute +

Periodically assess smoking status and, if she is a continuing smoker, encourage cessation.

The National Partnership for Smoke Free Families offers numerous resources to help make the 5 A's a routine part of prenatal care. For more information, visit www.tobacco-cessation.org/pregnantsmokers.htm.