

Smoking and Breastfeeding

Facts:

- Nicotine has been reported to be one of the most addictive drugs.
- Mothers who smoke while pregnant will have a baby born addicted to nicotine.
- Mothers who stop smoking or reduce the number of cigarettes they smoke while they are pregnant are less likely to resume after delivery.
- Nicotine from cigarettes is rapidly and completely absorbed from the mother's lungs, into her blood and then into her breast milk.
- Babies will also absorb nicotine, tar and carbon monoxide from the air when people around them smoke; this is called second hand smoke.
- **The levels of nicotine in a baby's blood stream are greater from second hand smoke than from nicotine in breast milk.**
- Mothers who breastfeed and smoke tend to have less breast milk.
- Colic, vomiting, diarrhea, restlessness and increased heart rate are all more common in babies whose mothers smoke.
- The 4,000 different toxins found in cigarette smoke cling to clothes, hair and skin and can be found on furniture, carpet, bedding, playpens, highchairs and strollers.
- Babies whose mothers smoke and who are bottle fed are more likely to die of SIDS than if they are breastfed.
- Babies who are raised with smokers are more likely to die from SIDS, have ear infections, serious infections, colds, wheezing and pneumonia, and asthma.

Clearly, it is not ideal to smoke and breastfeed, but it is worse to smoke and not breastfeed. (Minchin, 1991)

Strategies:

- **Stop smoking!** St. Francis offers a free Smoking Cessation class. Call 351-9266 to register.
- If you must smoke, reduce the number of cigarettes and change to a lower tar brand.
- Don't allow any smoking in an enclosed area where the baby or child may be, such as inside the house or car. **Smoke outside.** Opening a window or smoking in a different room is not enough to keep the exposure to the infant down.
- If you must smoke, smoke **after** nursing.
- Cover your hair with a scarf and clothing with a coat or big shirt while smoking outside and leave the clothing outside.
- Wash your hands and face after smoking to remove the toxins.
- Don't take your baby into smoky environments.

*Denise Fisher: Social Drugs and Breastfeeding: Handling an issue that isn't black and white. www.breasted.com
Philp Kum-Nji, Carole Mangrem: Reducing the Incidence of SIDS in the Delta Region of Mississippi: A three pronged approach. *South Med J* 94(7):704-71, 2001*