

# Postpartum intervention/support prevents smoking relapse, extends breastfeeding duration

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New mothers who smoke are less likely to breastfeed. But those who quit smoking during or just prior to becoming pregnant were significantly more likely to remain smoke free and continue breastfeeding if they received support and encouragement during the first eight weeks following child birth, according to a study presented Monday, Oct. 4, at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) National Conference and Exhibition in San Francisco.

Mothers who smoke are more than twice as likely to quit [breastfeeding](#) before their child is 10 weeks old, and more than 50 percent of mothers who quit smoking during their pregnancy, begin smoking again, usually two to eight weeks postpartum.

In the study, "Increasing the Duration of Breastfeeding by Preventing Postpartum Smoking Relapse," mothers who had quit smoking during or just prior to pregnancy, and had [babies](#) admitted to the [Neonatal Intensive Care Unit](#) (NICU), were placed into two groups: a "relapse prevention" group and a "standard of care" group. Both groups of mothers received information about the importance of providing a smoke-free environment for their baby and breastfeeding support. Because stress is a major factor in smoking relapse, the mothers in the intervention group also received information about newborn behaviors, and were encouraged to have frequent skin-to-skin contact with their babies, fostering mother-infant bonding in the NICU.

At the end of eight weeks postpartum, 82 percent of mothers in the intervention group remained smoke free and 86 percent continued to breastfeed. In the standard of care group, 44 percent of mothers were smoke free after eight weeks, and only 7 percent continued to breastfeed.

"By decreasing secondhand [smoking](#) exposure and increasing breastfeeding duration, both of which have well documented short- and long-term benefits, this intervention can make a significant contribution to the health of infants and their mothers," said Raylene Phillips, MD, FAAP, lead author of the study, who presented the research results at the AAP conference.

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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