

# Many US women still smoke before, during pregnancy: report

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(HealthDay)—Despite the potential risks to their baby's health, roughly

one in 10 women smoke in the three months before getting pregnant, U.S. health officials reported Wednesday.

And only one-quarter of those [women](#) quit before they become pregnant, the researchers said.

"Smoking during [pregnancy](#) is double trouble," said lead researcher Sally Curtin, a statistician at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics. "There is a mountain of research that it does affect the unborn child."

Dr. Edward McCabe, [senior vice president](#) and chief medical officer at the March of Dimes, said, "We know that [smoking](#) is a problem for pregnancy, and we continue to see many women smoking."

Smoking leads to premature birth and [low birth weight](#) infants, which increases the odds for mental and developmental problems that can affect someone for their whole life, McCabe said.

Premature birth is also a risk factor for cerebral palsy, lung disease and [premature death](#), he added.

McCabe said that women need to make their own decisions about smoking, but they should plan their pregnancies and get their bodies in the best [health](#) possible beforehand.

Curtin believes that smoking among [pregnant women](#) is under-reported and many more smoke than admit to it. "But even 8.4 percent who smoked at any time during pregnancy is a lot of women," she said. "We have 3.8 million births—that's about 300,000 babies each year."

Using birth certificate data from 2014, the researchers were able to find out the average number of cigarettes smoked before and during

pregnancy, along with how many women quit before and during pregnancy.

According to the report, smoking was most prevalent among women aged 20 to 24 (13 percent). In addition, American Indian and Alaska Native women were most likely to be smokers (18 percent).

Smoking during pregnancy in most states averaged about 10 percent, ranging from almost 2 percent in California to about 27 percent in West Virginia, Curtin said.

Among women who quit before or during pregnancy, most had more education, private insurance and were Asian or Hispanic, she added. Almost 21 percent of women who did not quit smoking before pregnancy did manage to quit by their third trimester, the report found.

And Curtin added that women who smoked during their entire pregnancy did smoke fewer cigarettes as the pregnancy progressed, from an average of 13 cigarettes per day before pregnancy to nine per day by the third trimester.

Still, smoking during pregnancy is a continuing public health issue, Curtin said.

McCabe added that women are looking for the best outcomes for their babies. "Part of planning a pregnancy, if you're smoking, is to work on quitting," he said.

The report was published in the Feb. 10 issue of the CDC's *National Vital Statistics Reports*.

**More information:** Visit the [March of Dimes](#) for more on pregnancy and smoking.

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