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HEALTH
DEPARTMENT
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Quit Smoking Help Available for Pregnant Women

CHARLEVOIX, Mich. – The Health Department of Northwest Michigan wants pregnant women to know that there is free help available for quitting smoking and tobacco use.

Smoking during pregnancy causes health harms for both the mother and the fetus. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, more than 100,000 babies have died in the last 50 years from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, complications from prematurity, complications from low birth weight, and other pregnancy problems resulting from parental smoking. Smoking also causes ectopic (tubal) pregnancy and impaired fertility, cleft lip and cleft palates in babies of women who smoke during early pregnancy. In addition, women's disease risks from smoking have risen over the last 50 years and are now equal to men's for lung cancer, COPD, and cardiovascular diseases. The number of women dying from COPD now exceeds the number of men.

In Michigan, rates of smoking among pregnant women have risen over the past several years from 16% in 2008 to over 18% in 2014. Quitting smoking is difficult because the nicotine contained in cigarettes is very addictive, but there are resources available to help. While it is best to quit smoking before becoming pregnant, quitting smoking at any point during pregnancy is helpful in reducing health harms to the woman and fetus.

“We want women and health care providers to know that there is free help available for pregnant and postpartum women to make quitting smoking during and after pregnancy easier,” stated Katie Joyce, Tobacco Dependence Prevention coordinator at the Health Department of Northwest Michigan.

The Michigan Tobacco Quitline is an evidence-based service that continues to provide free help with quitting smoking to all pregnant women regardless of insurance status. The services available for pregnant women include more counseling sessions, incentives, and free nicotine replacement therapy if a woman has a prescription from her physician. Pregnant women can call the Quitline directly at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669), and health care providers can refer women to the Quitline using a fax referral form available at <https://michigan.quitlogix.org/>. Staff and providers in all health care settings can refer patients to the Quitline.

Pregnant women are eligible for 5 counseling sessions during pregnancy and 4 counseling sessions during the postpartum period. Pregnant women receive a welcome packet after their first call and are assigned to a counselor trained to offer counseling specific to pregnant women. Pregnant women receive a rewards card for each call completed during pregnancy and the postpartum period.

“We encourage all health care providers to ask pregnant women about smoking at each visit during and after pregnancy, advise women to quit, and to refer women to the Michigan Tobacco Quitline if help is needed with quitting smoking,” stated Joyce. “Because nicotine is very addictive, people who smoke, including pregnant women who smoke, are best able to quit when they get help and support.”

For more information, please contact the Health Department of Northwest Michigan at (800) 432-4121 or call the Michigan Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).

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