

Breastfeeding may prevent postpartum smoking relapse

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While a large number of women quit or reduce smoking upon pregnancy recognition, many resume smoking postpartum. Previous research has estimated that approximately 70% of women who quit smoking during pregnancy relapse within the first year after childbirth, and of those who relapse, 67% resume smoking by three months, and up to 90% by six months.

A new study out in the *Nicotine & Tobacco Research* indicates the only significant predictor in change in smoking behaviors for women who smoked during pregnancy was in those who breastfed their infant, finding that women who breastfed their infants for at least 90 days smoked less in the months following childbirth than women who breastfed for a shorter period of time or who did not breastfeed at all.

Educational Psychology and Quantitative Methods program. It followed 168 women who were smokers during pregnancy from their first prenatal appointments through nine months after childbirth. The researchers looked at breastfeeding, use of other substances, and if their partners were smokers, in order to help determine possible predictors of changes in smoking habits.

The researchers found that women returned to more than half of their levels of preconception tobacco consumption by nine months after childbirth. "Although women decreased their tobacco consumption across their [pregnancy](#), by nine months postpartum they had substantially increased their smoking," said Shisler.

"Increase in [tobacco consumption](#) after the birth of a child may have harmful effects on both the mother, and the infant who is at higher risk of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke," noted Shisler.

"Breastfeeding seems to be a protective factor against increases in smoking after childbirth, so interventions should educate women about breastfeeding to maximize effectiveness. Supporting [women](#) through at least three months of breastfeeding may have long-term benefits in terms of [smoking](#) reduction."

More information: *Nicotine Tob Res* (2015) [DOI: 10.1093/ntr/ntv057](https://doi.org/10.1093/ntr/ntv057)
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