How lifestyle changes during pregnancy can make a big difference for you and your baby

Use what is in this leaflet

Does alcohol, smoking, drug use or excessive stress affect you?

What is your goal while you are pregnant?

Importance of making a change

On a scale of 0 (not important) to 10 (very important) how would you rate the importance of making a change now?

Why have you given this rating?

What would help you get it to where you would give it greater importance?

Confidence about making a change regarding alcohol

On a scale of 0 (not important) to 10 (very important) how would you rate the importance of making this change?

Why have you given this rating?

What would help you feel more confident about making a change about drinking?

Think about changes you have made in the past.

What can you do with this?

Making a plan

Planning is a helpful way to make a change.

Set yourself a goal to achieve change: This will need to be something you can believe you can do.

What: When:

Recognise difficult situations: when might you find it hardest to change

Prepare for difficult situations: think of ways to cope when you find it hard to change

Who can help me?

Get Support

How do you feel when you do make a change?

Who is there for support?

Smoking

The Health Improvement Midwife can offer intensive support and suggestions on nicotine replacement to use. Contact Cathy on: 07715044886

For support if you live outside the South Eastern Trust area see www.want2stop.info/stop-smoking-services

Alcohol

Alcohol and You provides a range of services:

Alcohol and You is The South Eastern Trust, ASCERT, Addiction NI and FASA working together to reduce alcohol related harm. Alcohol and You is funded by the Big Lottery’s Impact of Alcohol Program

Are you affected by someone else’s drinking?

Family intervention service is part of Alcohol and You. It is for family members affected by another person’s drinking. The person misusing alcohol does not need to be seeking help with their drinking for you to make use of this service. Tel: 08002545123

For other support available and for support outside the South Eastern Trust area see www.drugsandalcoholni.info for a directory of services.

Other useful contacts

Mental Health Concerns: www.nidirect.gov.uk/mental-health

24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline: 0800 8021 414

(other number will not appear on your phone bill or be disclosed via 1471)

24hoursupport@dvhelpline.org

Family support: www.familysupportni.gov.uk

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What do you want for your baby?

Alcohol Advice

- Alcohol is dangerous to your baby at any level of pregnancy and should be avoided in the first 3 months.
- When pregnant women drink alcohol, the alcohol in her bloodstream passes freely through the placenta to developing baby's blood.
- Babies cannot drink alcohol as they do not have a fully developed liver.
- If you do drink alcohol, it cannot filter out the effects from the alcohol, like an adult can. Instead, the alcohol circulates in the baby's bloodstream system causing damage to the organs and nervous system.

The Chief Medical Officers’ guidelines:

- If you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy the safest approach is not to drink alcohol at all, to keep risks to your baby to a minimum.
- Drinking at a level that is above your drinking limit while you are pregnant is risky for your baby.
- Women who find out that they are pregnant after having consumed alcohol in the early stages of pregnancy should avoid drinking any alcohol.
- Alcohol in pregnancy is especially dangerous because a developing baby's blood circulates in the same system as the mother.
- If you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, the safest approach is not to drink alcohol.
- Women who find out that they are pregnant after consuming alcohol in the early stages of pregnancy should avoid drinking any alcohol.

What is FASD?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is an umbrella term for a range of conditions caused by alcohol exposure in the womb. The mother does not have to be drinking heavily for this to occur. Symptoms of FASD may include:

- Learning difficulties, problems with motor development and behaviour, memory and attention problems, hyperactivity, facial deformities, being small at birth and throughout life.

What is a healthy baby?

As the title says, however, if YOU TAKE IT TAKE IT!

Some research findings show that babies born to women who abuse illegal drugs or tobacco when they are pregnant may have brain structure changes that persist into early adolescence.

You may not be able to change your situation but the right support can make a big difference for you and your baby. Your midwife is here to help and support you.

Smoking

Smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of complications for the mother and baby.

These include:
- Miscarriage
- Premature birth
- Low birth-weight
- Increased risk of cot death
- Increased risk of stillbirth

While some women may welcome the prospect of delivering a smaller baby, studies have shown that babies growing lengthways through smoking can have negative consequences that last a lifetime.

Why be concerned about smoking?

- Cigarette smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, including things like cyanide and lead.
- Carbon monoxide is produced from your cigarette. This toxic mix gets into your bloodstream destroying healthy red blood cells; this is your baby’s only source of oxygen and nutrients.
- Nicotine in Cigarettes chokes off oxygen for your baby by narrowing blood vessels throughout your body, including the ones in the umbilical cord.

A few cigarettes a day are safer than a whole pack, but the difference isn’t as great as you might think. A smoker’s body is especially sensitive to the first doses of nicotine from cigarettes each day, and even just one or two cigarettes will significantly tighten blood vessels.

Drugs including over the counter medication

As previously stated when you take it, your baby takes it. All drugs will pass through the placenta to your baby. For advice regarding prescription drugs - see your GP.

Excessive stress

Evidence indicates extreme stress and anxiety in pregnancy can have harmful effects that can continue throughout the infant’s lifespan. That’s because stress releases a harmful hormone called cortisol which can cross the placenta and affect the normal development of your child’s wellbeing.

What are these long term stresses?
- • Someone in the family with an alcohol or drug problems
- • A long term health condition or mental health problem
- • Domestic violence
- • Work place stress

A dangerous thing about chronic stress is that people get used to it and they just accept it and say they are coping.

Taking illegal drugs in pregnancy increases the chance of birth defects, premature birth, low birth weight and still birth. Your baby can become physically addicted in the womb and therefore after the baby is born they can suffer from newborn withdrawal symptoms. If you have any question or concerns talk to your midwife or GP.

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premature labour. Also if you drink alcohol during pregnancy your baby could suffer from

deformities, being small, at birth and throughout life. Symptoms of FASD may include:

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