SMOKING DURING AND AFTER PREGNANCY*

By Amy E. Tackett, PharmD
PharmacistCARE Resident

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

- Smoking during pregnancy is known to be a CAUSE of SIDS
- Exposure to secondhand smoke after birth increases the risk of SIDS
- Evidence:
  - Chemicals in secondhand smoke interfere with the regulation of infant’s breathing
  - Infants who die from SIDS have more nicotine in their lungs and higher levels of cotinine (biological marker for smoke exposure) than infants who die of other causes

Other health risks

- Increases the risk of pregnancy-related complications for mom, including pre-eclampsia, severe vaginal bleeding, increased risk of ectopic pregnancy, doubled risk of placental complications (placenta previa and placental abruption) and miscarriage
- Doubles risk of low birth weight (which is related to an increased rate of illnesses and, even into adulthood, and chronic disabilities including cerebral palsy, learning disabilities and mental retardation)
- Premature birth
- Stillbirth
- Miscarriage

Exposure to Second Hand Smoke after Birth

- Causes acute lower respiratory infections (bronchitis and pneumonia)
- Increased frequency and severity of asthma attacks in children who already have asthma
- Causes more respiratory symptoms (cough, phlegm, wheeze, and breathlessness) among school-aged children
- Increased risk for ear infections as well as the need to have tubes inserted into the ears for drainage

Breast-Feeding

- Nicotine DOES appear in breast milk