

Cigarettes, Tobacco, Nicotine and Lactation



Chest/breastfeeding is recommended, even if you smoke, vape or chew tobacco. Using harm reduction strategies in this document helps to protect your baby from nicotine exposure.

What is nicotine?

Nicotine is a stimulant. It speeds up heart rate, breathing, and increases blood pressure. Nicotine is found in cigarettes, vapes, cigars, chewing tobacco, and nicotine replacement therapy.

Can nicotine enter human milk?

Yes. When you use nicotine, it gets in your milk. Nicotine levels are highest 10 minutes after smoking a cigarette. Your body processes nicotine quickly. 1 ½ hours after smoking, half of the nicotine has left your milk.

What to do before, during, and after using nicotine

Before using nicotine:

- Try to nurse your baby right before you smoke, vape or chew.
- Try to nurse your baby right before you take fast-acting nicotine replacement therapies (gums, sprays, lozenges, and inhalers).

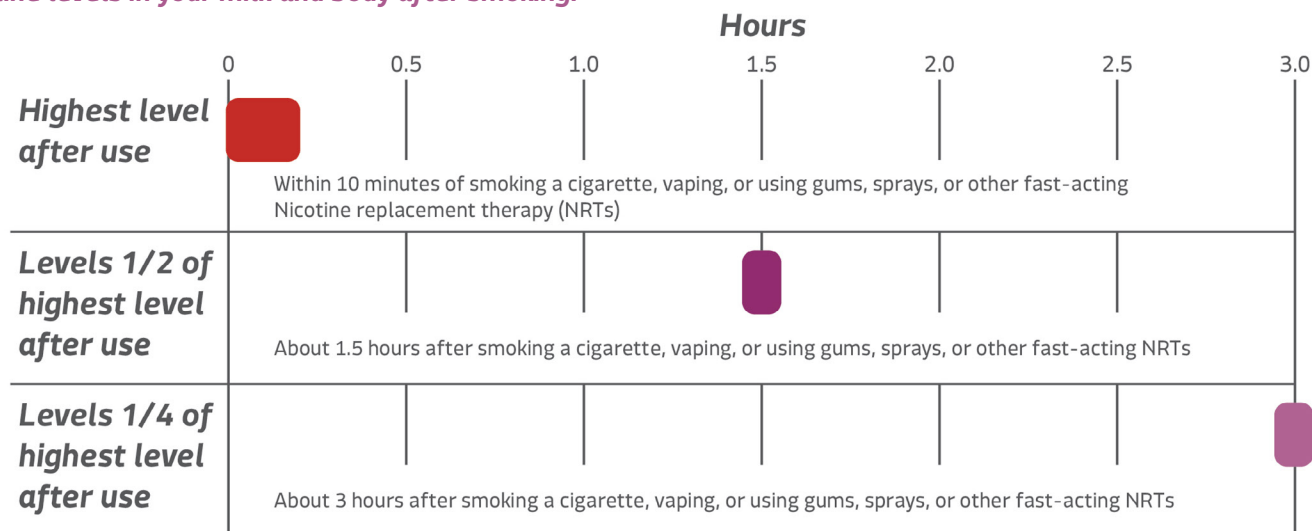
While using nicotine:

- Avoid smoking or vaping near your baby, where your baby lives, or in closed spaces like cars. If you can't go outside, smoke or vape out an open window.

After using nicotine:

- You don't need to pump and discard your milk after using nicotine. When you can, nurse your baby before using nicotine. Even if you nurse your baby right after smoking or vaping, feeding your baby your milk is better than infant formula.

Nicotine levels in your milk and body after smoking:



Keeping you and your baby healthy and safe

- Take a multivitamin with iodine, use iodized salt at home, and eat brightly colored fruits and vegetables to increase the nutrition in your milk.
- Talk to your baby's healthcare provider if your baby is jittery, fussy or has vomiting and diarrhea.
- Avoid sleeping in the same bed as your baby. The safest sleep arrangement is to share the same room with your baby in their own crib.
- Store tobacco and other substances securely. This is especially important if toddlers or other children are in the house.
 - **If you think your baby has swallowed any form of nicotine**, call Poison Control at 800-222-1222.
- Protect yourself and your baby from secondhand and thirdhand smoke. Thirdhand smoke is when smoke gets into things like fabric and wallpaper.
 - Don't allow smoking indoors.
 - Ask people not to smoke near your baby.
 - Get a HEPA air filter and put it in the room where you and your baby spend the most time.
 - If someone smokes in your home, wipe down surfaces and wash fabrics.
 - Wear a jacket or blanket while smoking or vaping outside, then wash your hands and remove the jacket or blanket before holding your baby.
- If you smoke, vape, or chew tobacco, consider taking Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) instead.



How nicotine and secondhand smoke or vape may affect an infant

When parents or other household members smoke cigarettes, their babies are at higher risk of:

- Breathing illnesses like bronchitis
- Ear infections
- Asthma
- Excessive crying
- SIDS

These effects come from breathing smoke, toxic chemicals in cigarettes or vapes, and from nicotine. **Nursing helps protect your baby from these conditions.**

Nicotine use and lactation

Smoking might decrease your milk supply or affect your letdown (the milk ejection reflex).

Babies exposed to nicotine before birth sometimes have trouble nursing. If you're having trouble, [lactation support](#) can help. If you give birth at a hospital, you can request a lactation consultant.

Smoking can reduce the nutrition in your milk and increase some heavy metals in your milk. Your milk is still more nutritious than infant formula and protects your baby from some illnesses.

Reducing your nicotine use

Do you want to stop or reduce how much you smoke, chew or vape? Talk to your health care provider or call the Washington State Quitline at 800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669) for free support. They can listen to your needs and help you get Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT).

People use different terms to describe their body parts. Some transgender and non-binary birth parents use "chest" instead of "breasts." In this document, we use breastfeeding and chestfeeding as interchangeable terms. Lactation is a biological process where your body makes milk to feed babies.