

28 June 2007

**PRESS COMMENT  
ON  
RISK OF CIGARETTE SMOKE ON PREGNANT WOMEN**

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**1. What are the risks faced by pregnant mothers towards cigarette smoke?**

TOBACCO is a dangerous product and hazardous to health and it is lethal. Four thousand compounds have been identified in tobacco smoke and at least 43 chemicals in tobacco smoke have been determined to be carcinogenic. (TAR - used in making roads, Naphtilamine - used in making paint, Hydrogen cyanide - HCN - used poison gas, Benzyl Alcohol and Amyl alcohol, Ammonia - gas that gives the urine its smell).

*(Source : Press Statement on "Tobacco and its Harmful Effect on Health and Towards a Tobacco Free Generation in Malaysia", 14 October 2002 by Datuk Dr N Athimulam, President of MMA [2001-2003])*

Nicotine, cyanide, hydrocarbons, vinyl chloride and carbon monoxide causes decreased blood flow and reduced oxygen supply to the fetus. Smoking also reduces Vitamin C levels, among other vitamin levels. If you smoke during pregnancy, your baby may suffer from growth retardation, mental disorders, placental complications, miscarriage or even death. Overall, babies of mothers who smoke have lower birth weight.

Smoking by fathers while the mother is pregnant - exposing her to secondhand smoke may also increase the risk of childhood cancers, mental retardation and respiratory problems.

*(Source : Cigarette Smoke and Pregnancy by Barry Herman, M.D., Susan Perry, PhD., WebMD Medical Reference from "The Twelve-Month Pregnancy")*

**2. What is the best step to prevent pregnant mothers from becoming victims of cigarette smoke?**

It all begins at home - husbands/fathers and other family members close to the pregnant mother or those living under the same roof should NEVER smoke inside the house or in the presence of the pregnant mother. Better still, QUIT SMOKING altogether for the well being of the mother and the baby.

**3. Will the MMA work together with the Ministry of Health to organize campaigns preventing smokers from smoking in public places which has been ignored all this while?**

Of course, the MMA will work together with the Ministry of Health. In fact, the MMA through the ASH Committee had played a significant role in tobacco control for the past 20 over years. We had organized two training courses for doctors from the government, private and the universities in Smoking Cessation last year. We also organize the International Quit Smoking and Win Campaign every year. Last year, the Ministry of Health, University Putra Malaysia and the Medical Services Department, Ministry of Defense were the co-organizers. Harian Metro, China Press and Tamil Nesan were the co-sponsors. The Ministry of Health sponsored this campaign and about 3,000 people participated and agreed to quit for one month.

World No Tobacco Day is held every year on 31 May and the MMA also commemorate this day every year.

**4. Why do the Malays have the highest smoking rate?**

We do not know the reason why. But generally, people start to smoke probably due to peer pressure and also the home environment whereby there are adults in the family who smoke.

**5. How does the cigarette smoke affect the baby in the womb and cause the child involved to become hyperactive or ADHD?**

Scientists have gradually become aware of an increase in the number of hyperactive children being born over the last thirty years, which seemed to coincide with an increase in smoking and above all, heavy smoking in women. This had led them to investigate further in order to find out whether there is a link between the two.

Investigations conducted by the Psychology Department of a Canadian University have uncovered a possible link between heavy maternal smoking and hyperactive (ADHD) children.

Although a very small number of children were observed, it was found that the mothers of these "hyperkinetic" children who were being treated with Ritalin, smoked on average 14 cigarettes a day whilst they were pregnant and increased this amount to 23 cigarettes a day after giving birth.

In comparison, mothers of "normal" children only smoked 6 cigarettes during pregnancy and 8 after giving birth.

The reason for the hyperactivity is found in the fact that high levels of carbon monoxide in the fetus, which were double the levels of the mother, were concentrating in the fetus, depriving it of necessary oxygen and consequently severely damaging and altering the unborn child's central nervous system.

*(Source : HelpwithSmoking.com - UK Smoking Ban Information)*

**6. Quit smoking can avoid the risk of cancer disease (comment).**

Cancer is the second leading cause of death and was among the first diseases causally linked to smoking. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death, and cigarette smoking causes 90% of the lung cancers. The more a person smokes, the higher the risk of getting cancer - not just of the lung, but also cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, larynx, bladder, kidney, cervix and pancreas.

Cigarette smoke contains about 4,000 chemical agents, including over 60 carcinogens. Many of these substances, such as carbon monoxide, tar, arsenic and lead are poisonous and toxic to the human body. Smoking harms nearly every major organ of the body. The risk of developing smoking-related diseases such as lung and other cancers, heart disease, stroke and respiratory illnesses, increases with total lifetime exposure to cigarette smoke. This includes the number of cigarettes a person smokes each day, the intensity of smoking (i.e. the size and frequency of puffs), the age at which smoking began, the number of years a person has smoked, and a smoker's secondhand smoke exposure.

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