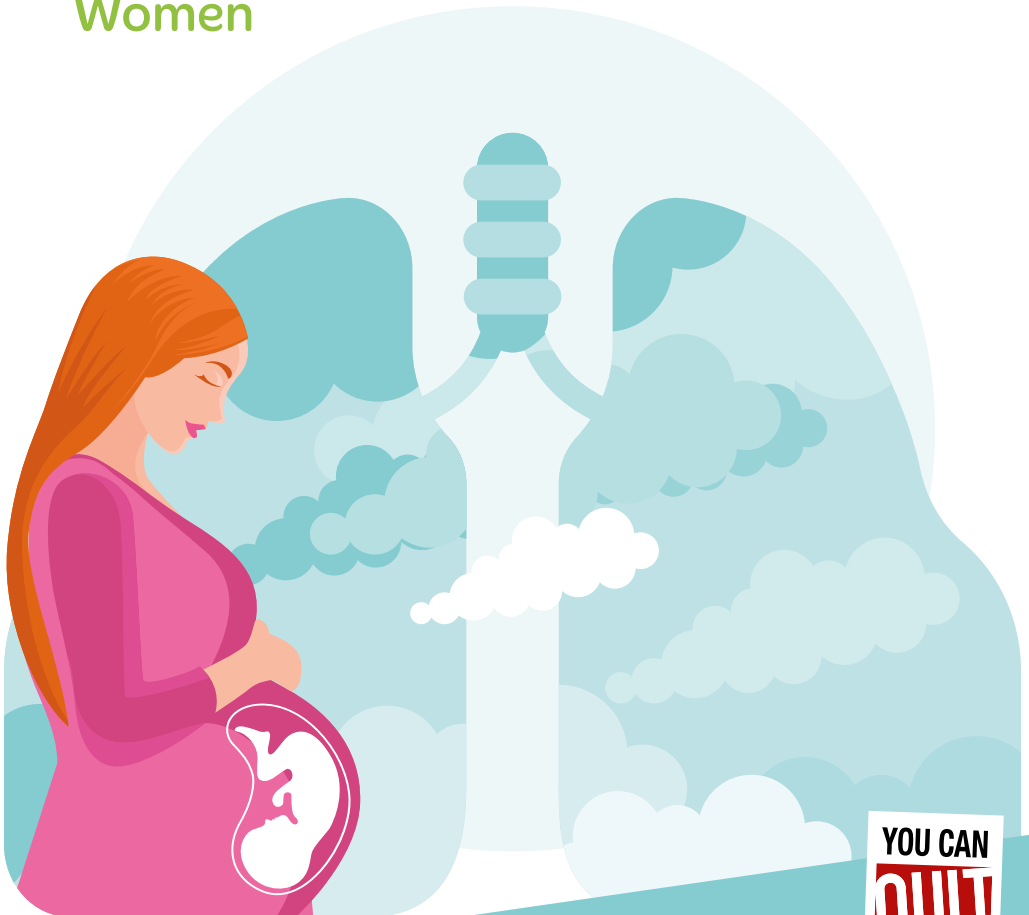




Why we offer carbon monoxide breath testing at your first hospital visit

Information Leaflet for Pregnant Women



About this leaflet

As part of your care during pregnancy (antenatal care), we are offering you a carbon monoxide breath test at your first visit to help you and your baby be healthy. This leaflet explains what carbon monoxide (CO) is, how the breath test works, its benefits to you and your baby and what supports are available.

What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous gas which you can't see or smell but which is dangerous to you and your baby. Being exposed to and breathing in CO can prevent oxygen reaching your baby, slow your baby's growth and development and lead to poor health.

How are people exposed to carbon monoxide?

Most people are exposed to carbon monoxide in three ways:

- Cigarette smoke
- Cooking or heating appliances that are faulty or poorly ventilated like gas, coal, wood and paraffin appliances
- Faulty car exhausts

Cigarette smoking is the most common source of exposure to carbon monoxide. Smoking during pregnancy can result in a wide range of problems for you and your baby, as described in the table below.

Effects on women

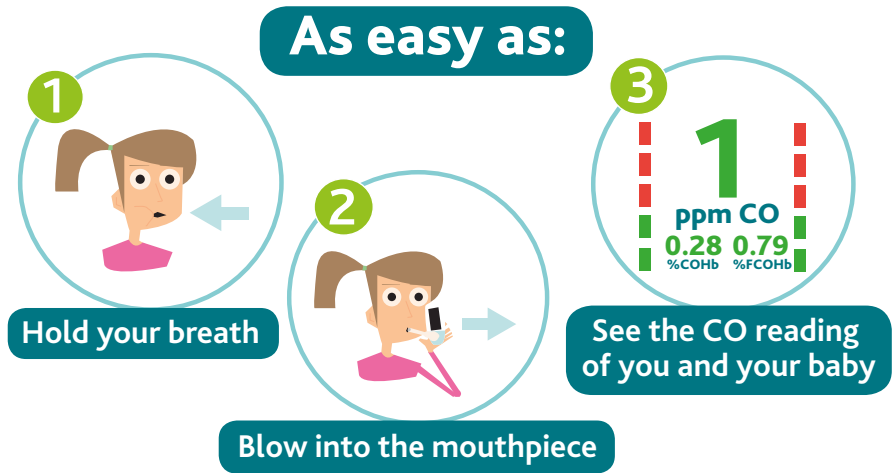
- Pregnancy occurs outside of the womb
- Placenta (afterbirth) separates from the womb too early causing bleeding
- Placenta covers the cervix (neck of womb) causing complications
- Waters break too early
- Risk of miscarriage

Effects on babies

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stillbirth• Baby born too small or too early and needs to be admitted to intensive care• Infant death• Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cleft lip/palate• Certain birth defects such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Clubfoot– Some heart defects– Gastroschisis (a small hole in baby's stomach) |
|---|---|

How does the midwife check my carbon monoxide levels?

The breath test measures the amount of CO in your blood in parts per million (ppm). It only takes a few minutes with immediate results which tell you if you have been exposed to unsafe levels of CO. Your midwife will explain the test to you before asking if you would like to complete it. Like any test, you can decide if you want to go ahead or not.



What do the results mean?

Your midwife will discuss the results (see below) with you and explore possible sources of exposure to carbon monoxide. This will include asking you about smoking. The midwife will arrange any follow-up care with you.

0-3

Your recent level of exposure to carbon monoxide is low

This shows little exposure to carbon monoxide in the last two days

4+

You have had some recent exposure to carbon monoxide

This suggests you have had recent exposure to carbon monoxide and this may be of concern

Why would my CO test number be high?

The most likely reason for a high number on your CO test is exposure to cigarette smoke, either from smoking or if someone in your home smokes.

What can I do to reduce my exposure to CO?

Reducing your exposure to cigarette smoke is the most important thing you can do for your and your baby's health. You can:

- quit smoking yourself
- avoid being around other people who are smoking
- ask others not to smoke in your home, in the car or in front of you

The good news is that once you stop, the carbon monoxide will clear from your bloodstream and your baby's. This will allow oxygen to flow to support their growth and development.

What supports are available to help me quit?

Your midwife can discuss options to help you quit smoking, including referring you to on-site or local stop smoking services, and the use of nicotine replacement therapy during your pregnancy to help you quit.

To find out more about the free supports available to you and those you live with who smoke, call the Quitline on **1800 201 203** or visit **www.QUIT.ie**

What can I do if I have a high score, but don't smoke?

If you are not usually exposed to cigarette smoke, but you have a reading of 4 or more, you may have been exposed to CO through faulty heating or cooking appliances.

We strongly recommend that you get expert help from the carbon monoxide phone line **1800 89 89 89**.

- It is important to check that your heating and cooking appliances are safely installed.
- You may wish to buy a carbon monoxide alarm that will detect low levels of carbon monoxide in your home. You can get one for less than €20 at any major supermarket or electrical goods store.



Sláintecare.

