

Your guide to... healthy living

This issue is all about what's best for you and your baby

It's not too late to do what's BEST!



The Healthy Pregnancy Issue

A YOUNG MOTHER'S INSPIRING STORY

When Chantel* was 17-years-old, she was a heavy smoker and drinker. She often spent weekends drinking and partying with friends. But her life took a drastic and scary turn when she fell pregnant.

She had to leave school in the middle of Grade 11. Her friends stayed away from her, warned by their mothers that Chantel was a bad influence. The boy who got her pregnant didn't want to know her. She felt alone and scared. She also felt ashamed that she had disappointed her mother. She began drinking even more - wine, beer, anything that was on hand, just to forget her worries.

"I drank strong wines and also the pink stuff you drink with milk. I was drinking because I was scared. But then I started feeling that I couldn't carry on anymore. I couldn't sleep properly and often felt nauseous and shaky."

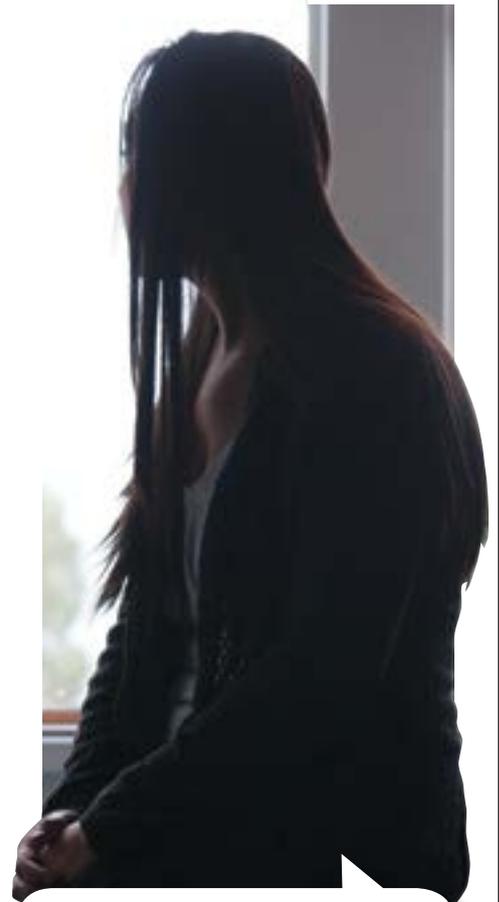
When she was about 12 weeks pregnant, Chantel went to the antenatal clinic at Belhar Day Hospital. "That day I found out that what I was doing was dangerous. Not only for me, but also for my unborn baby".

When the clinic midwife heard

that Chantel was drinking and smoking, she suggested that she go and see a counsellor called Beverley. Beverley told her about the risks of smoking and drinking during pregnancy and that her baby could be born underweight and have lots of serious health problems. She also gave her some material to read. This new information shocked her.

"I was so glad the sisters at the clinic introduced me to Beverley. She really motivated me. I realised that if I carried on smoking and drinking, I could have a baby with very serious problems, like brain damage or breathing problems."

Once she had gotten over her first feelings of disappointment about the pregnancy, Chantel's mother was very caring. She told Chantel that they could raise the child together. Chantel confided in her mother about her drinking and told her about her talk with Beverley. She told her that she had decided to give up drinking and smoking for the sake of her baby, and that she needed her mother to support her. Luckily, Chantel's mother did not smoke or drink herself, which made it easier for her to help. But the first few weeks were still nail-bitingly



"I felt alone and scared. I also felt ashamed that I had disappointed my mother. So I began drinking more..."

Story continued on page 2



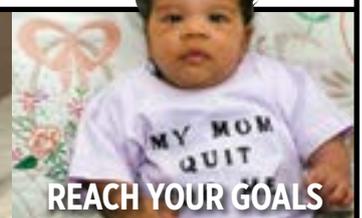
LATEST INFO



PERSONAL STORIES



USEFUL TIPS



REACH YOUR GOALS

Get updated on the latest information, pick up some useful tips and read interesting personal stories about how others have managed to achieve their health goals.

hard for Chantel. She had been in the habit of socialising with her cousins on weekends, but now she had to find excuses not to go out with them. "I knew I was weak and could not say 'no' to drinking and smoking if I was with them. So, I rather just stayed away," she said. Over time, her confidence grew. "I can do this," she told herself.

"Giving up the drinking was easier than I expected. It had been making me feel sick anyway. But quitting smoking was difficult at first, because I struggled to sleep. To help myself, I made sure there were no cigarettes in the house, so that if I craved one, I would have to walk all the way to the shop to get one. That worked, because it was too much of a 'las' to go to the shop every time I wanted a cigarette."

In a matter of weeks, Chantel was free of the cigarettes and the alcohol, and her fears calmed. She even started enjoying her pregnancy. Her mother's continued support was what she needed now to stick to her decision. She stayed at home most of the time and she had visits from the youth leaders at her church, which she appreciated. She went to the clinic regularly, and when she felt the baby move for the first time, she began to feel excited and positive.

She constantly thought back on her talk with Beverly. When she needed reminding of why she was going through this struggle, she re-read the leaflet that Beverly had given her, which explained the risks of smoking and drinking during pregnancy. The leaflet also explained that once you

give up, your body recovers quickly. Chantel found this very encouraging.

"I felt so glad I had done it... I discovered I had the strength to leave it, whereas there were other people who couldn't," she added.

"I kept thinking about what Beverly said: "If I smoke, my baby also smokes. If I drink, my baby drinks too."

Her baby son, Andre* was born at 41 weeks at Tygerberg Hospital. Chantel had a natural birth and everything went well.

"When he came out, I immediately asked the midwife, how many fingers and toes he had and if he was normal.

"To drink and smoke does not, in the end, help you escape your troubles. It just gives you more."

I was so relieved when she told me that it was all over and that my baby was a healthy, happy boy."

Soon afterwards she took Andre to Beverly. "She was so pleased to see us and she told me she was very proud of me."

Chantel has never received support from Andre's dad, but her mother and grandmother have stood by her. They helped her care for Andre when she went back to school.

When Andre was three months old, she met the guy she has been with ever since. He is now Dad to baby Chantel's baby.

"The boyfriend I have now has been there for Andre from day one," she ex-

plained. "Andre doesn't even know his biological father, but everything has turned out well and we are happy together."

When she looks at her son now, Chantel feels so thankful that she made the decision to quit drinking and smoking. She has no regrets about the sacrifices she had to make. She feels the experience has matured her. She now knows she wants much more out of life than partying.

"I can be proud of myself that I quit. I have absolutely no regrets. I have a handsome little boy who has no health problems. I am so relieved that I was able to do this for him, and for myself."

Asked what had helped her the most to make the change, Chantel was clear. "It was Beverly's talk, definitely. When she talked about the risks to the baby, I believed her. I realised that I knew children who had probably been affected".

Chantel might still be a young mother, but she has a lesson for other women out there, who might find themselves in a similar situation,

"It's better to stop with the drinking and smoking because the baby you are carrying is a real person - living and growing inside you. It isn't just about you anymore; it is about the two of you together."

"To drink and smoke for a bit of enjoyment is selfish. And it does not, in the end, help you escape your troubles. In fact, it just gives you more. And these can be serious problems, which can affect you and your baby for the rest of your lives. What I would say to someone else, is that if I can quit, you can too."

* Not their real names.

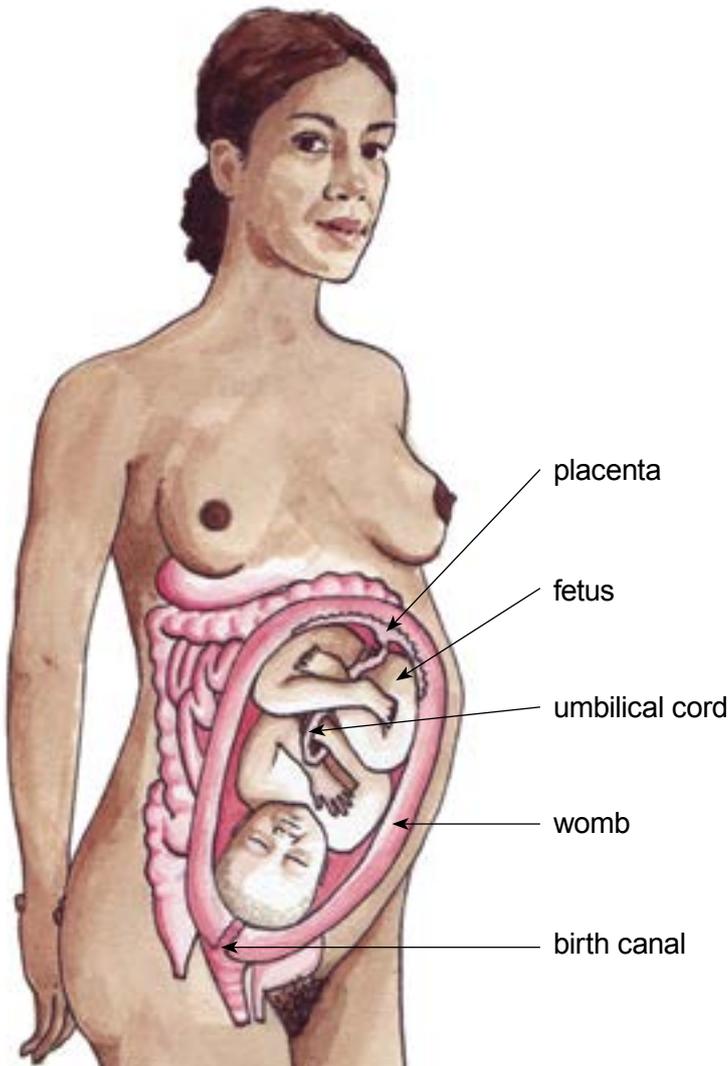
THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL ON YOUR BABY

The most dangerous drug of all is alcohol. Alcohol can cause very serious brain damage and physical abnormalities in your unborn baby (a condition called FAS or Fetal Alcohol Syndrome).

- Babies with FAS have severe learning and behavioural difficulties, which last for the rest of their lives. They can also have heart defects and abnormalities in the arms, legs, kidneys, ears and eyes.
- Not many people realise that even drinking a small amount of alcohol at a critical time in pregnancy can damage your baby in this way.
- Even ciders, Brutal Fruits, Smirnoff Spins and traditional beers have enough alcohol in them to cause harm.
- FAS is totally preventable. If you do not drink alcohol while you are pregnant, your baby will not get FAS.



When you smoke, drink alcohol or use drugs, your baby does too



The poisonous chemicals in smoke, alcohol and drugs reach your baby through your bloodstream.

When you are pregnant, your baby gets all the oxygen and nutrients (food) it needs to develop and grow from your blood. When you smoke, drink alcohol or use drugs, the chemicals in these substances enter into your bloodstream. They then pass through the placenta and umbilical cord into your baby's blood. So, whenever you smoke, drink alcohol or use drugs, your unborn baby does too. Many of the chemicals in these substances can harm your unborn baby.

Many women have said that pregnancy is a very good time to quit using substances, because wanting to protect your baby gives you added will power.

THERE IS **NO** SAFE LEVEL OF ALCOHOL USE DURING PREGNANCY



It is therefore best not to drink any alcohol at all when you are pregnant. However, binge drinking (when you drink 4 or more drinks on one occasion) is especially dangerous.

If you do carry on drinking alcohol, make sure you eat at the same time and drink lots of water or cool drinks in-between drinks. Also, rather stick to those drinks with the lowest % of alcohol (the labels on bottles will tell you the % of alcohol in each type of drink).

The effects of smoking on your baby

The dangerous chemicals in cigarette smoke:

Nicotine (the addictive drug in tobacco)

Carbon monoxide (found in car exhaust fumes)

Ammonia (found in toilet cleaner)

Arsenic (found in rat poison)

Acetone (found in nail polish remover)

DDT (found in insecticide)

Cyanide (found in car batteries)

The poisons in cigarette smoke can damage your baby's lungs.

Children born to smokers are more likely to develop asthma.

They also have a greater chance of being born with a cleft lip or palate (when the lip or roof of the mouth does not join properly).

Baby with cleft palate and lip.

The effects of drugs on your baby

Tik, dagga, heroin and cocaine can affect the baby's developing brain and nervous system.

- Children born to drug users have learning difficulties and behavioural problems as they grow up. For example, they can be aggressive or hyperactive (abnormally active and energetic) and have difficulties concentrating in class.
- Tik (crystal methamphetamine) can cause abnormalities with the baby's heart, kidneys, brain, digestive system and skeleton. Using tik increases the chance of miscarriage, reduced head size, premature delivery, birth deformities and stillbirth.
- Babies born to mothers who use tik, dagga, heroin or cocaine can experience severe withdrawal symptoms after birth. This can make them tremble, cry a lot and sleep badly. They can also have difficulties breathing, sucking and swallowing.



Having a low birth weight baby increases the chances of your baby dying during birth or in the first few weeks of life.

Drinking alcohol, smoking and taking drugs all reduce the amount of blood that flows to your baby, causing poor growth in the womb and low birth weight. The less oxygen and food a baby gets from its mother's blood, the smaller and weaker it is at birth.



It is never too late to stop!

No matter how far you are into your pregnancy, you and your baby will benefit from you quitting. As soon as you quit using drugs, alcohol or tobacco during pregnancy your baby will get more oxygen and food and start growing better. Within one day after quitting, your blood pressure will have dropped. This means you will have less chance of getting a heart attack, developing problems during your pregnancy and having difficulties with the birth.

SUBSTANCE USE AND THE RISKS TO YOUR OWN HEALTH

Using alcohol, drugs or tobacco is even more dangerous for your health if you are pregnant. This is because they can cause serious complications with your pregnancy, such as miscarriage, premature labour (when the baby is born too early) and placenta abruption (when the placenta comes away from the wall of the womb). If this happens, you will need to be rushed to hospital to get emergency medical care.



Healthy lung



Diseased lung

Smoking causes:

- Cancer
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Chronic bronchitis
- Emphysema (when the air sacs in your lungs are slowly destroyed)

Alcohol abuse causes:

- Liver damage
- Heart problems and strokes
- Loss of memory, slow reactions
- Mental health problems (depression, anxiety)
- Long term brain damage

Drug abuse causes:

- Sleeping problems
- Convulsions and brain bleeds
- Heart problems and strokes
- Mental health problems such as depression, paranoia or psychosis (when someone sees or hears things that are not true or when they lose touch with reality)
- Inability to make good decisions, which can lead to risky or violent behaviour
- Permanent brain damage
- Lung problems



Do you want to quit, but worry that you can't?

You might really want to quit, but worry that you lack the strength. Think about what could give you more confidence to make a change. Here are some suggestions that may help:

- Think of past difficulties or challenges in your life which you have managed to cope with or overcome. Think about what you learnt from these experiences
- Think about your positive qualities as a person
- Ask for support from your family, the father of your baby or friends (as Chantel did in the story on page 1)
- Choose a Quit Buddy. Plan to quit together with your partner or a

friend. Or ask someone who has succeeded in quitting in the past to support you

- Speak to a midwife at the clinic. She can refer you to a mental health nurse or social worker who has been trained to help people who use substances
- Ask your midwife if there is a lay counsellor at the clinic who you can talk to. At some clinics there are lay counsellors who are trained to help pregnant women with their problems

You can also contact a professional counsellor at one of the organisations listed on the back page (page 8).

It takes courage to give up an addictive substance. But if you get the right support, you CAN succeed in quitting and taking back control of your life!



Set your goals

You will need to decide what goals you want to set for yourself. For instance do you want to cut down over a period of time or stop straight away.

- It is good to set a specific quit date and prepare to give up completely by then.
- Think about what problems you may experience in trying to quit and how you can solve them.
- Talk to your 'Quit Buddy' and tell him/her about your plans to quit.

My personal quitting goals

Eg. Stop completely in 7 days time.

Difficulties and how to solve them

*Eg. My friends pressurise me.
Avoid socialising with them for a while.*



Take it one day at a time. Avoid the thought that you will never smoke, drink or use drugs again. Think only of getting through this one day and tackle tomorrow when it comes. Just say to yourself that you won't use substances today.

Break your habits

Use your diary to help you work out how to break your habits. These suggestions from other smokers might help you.

Helpful Hints:

- Avoid socialising with those people who smoke, drink or use alcohol.
- Ask your family/partner to support you by not smoking, drinking or using drugs at home.
- Stay away from those situations that make you want to use substances, for instance going to parties or clubs.
- Distract yourself by doing something different for instance take up a new interest or hobby, do housework, put on some music and dance.
- Get rid of anything in your home and handbag that might trigger a craving. For instance ashtrays, lighters, cigarette packets, bottles of alcohol or tik pipes.
- Buy a stock of chewing gum, dried fruit, crunchy carrots, nuts or sweets so that you have something to chew on when you feel cravings.
- Drink ice cold water, fruit juice or herbal teas like rooibos.
- Be physically active. For instance take brisk walks around your neighbourhood (you can safely do moderate exercise even when you are pregnant).
- Take good care of yourself. Eat healthily, take a multivitamin for pregnant women and get lots of sleep.
- Give yourself pep talks. Look in the mirror when you wake up in the morning and say, "I am in control. It is my choice to quit. I can do it!"
- If you are religious, pray for strength whenever you feel a craving.
- De-stress by doing exercise or by sitting somewhere quiet and taking slow, deep breaths.
- Every time you succeed in resisting the urge to have a smoke or drink, think about how your body (and your baby's) is getting a chance to clean and repair itself.
- Reward yourself for your success. Remember, you are saving money by not using substances, so you can afford to spoil yourself sometimes.

If you find that you are really struggling to cope with withdrawal symptoms, it is best to seek medical advice from your nearest health centre.

If you slip up...

Don't give up if you have a slip up or a bad day. You can learn a lot from your mistakes. Quitting is difficult and can take time. The smallest step in the right direction takes you towards your goal. Remind yourself why you wanted to quit. Tell yourself you are still a quitter and try again right away.

English word	Explanation	Xhosa	Afrikaans
Nutrients	The vitamins and minerals one gets from food.	Izakha mzimba	Voedingstowwe, vitamieni
Chemicals	Substances produced by or used in a chemical process.	Chemicals	Chemiese stowwe of net 'chemicals'
Umbilical cord	The cord which connects the fetus or unborn baby to the placenta of the mother.	Inkaba	Naelstring
Womb	The organ in the mother's body in which the baby grows.	Isibeleko	Baarmoeder 'Baar'
Placenta	The organ on the wall of the womb, which transfers blood from the mother to the fetus.	Isizamva	Nageboorte
Physical abnormalities	Some abnormal aspect of the body. Malformations or defects.	Isilima	Fisiese abnormaliteite
Central nervous system	The brain and spinal cord.	Imithambo yoluvo or Ubuchopho nomnqonqo	Sentrale senuwee stelsel
Digestive system	The part of your body that digests food and absorbs nutrients. It would include your stomach and intestines.	Isisu namathumbu	Verteringstelsel 'derms & maag'
Binge drinking	Drinking more than 4 glasses of alcohol on one occasion, for eg, during one evening or afternoon.	Ukusela kakhulu ngexeshana	Drink sessie
Alcohol abuse	Drinking too much alcohol (more than 1 glass a day for women, or 2 glasses a day for men).	Ukuba linxila	Alkohol misbruik
Substance abuse	The harmful use of a substance, like drugs or alcohol, which has negative effects on an individual's physical and mental health.	Ukusebenzisa iziyobisi	Dwelmmiddel misbruik 'Drug abuse'
Withdrawal symptoms	When someone is addicted to a substance, they may experience unpleasant symptoms, such as headaches or nausea when they stop taking them.	Ityhontyi nokunqanqatheka	Ontrekking-simptome 'Horries, klontjies'
Slip up	When you relapse or lose self control.	Ukubuyela kwimikhwa yangaphambili	Terugval 'Relapse'

SUBSTANCE ABUSE SUPPORT SERVICES

You can contact a professional counsellor at one of the following:

Cancer Association Quit Smoking line: 0800 226622 (Free call)

National Council against Smoking Quit line: 011 720 3145

The Cape Town Drug Counselling Centre:

Observatory: 021 447 8026

Mitchell's Plain: 021 391 0216

Website: www.drugcentre.org.za

SA National Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence (SANCA):

Toll Free Number: 086 147 2622

Website: <http://sancanational.org>

Support Groups:

Narcotics Anonymous:

24hr Helpline: 083 900 6962

Website: www.na.org.za

Alcoholics Anonymous:

National Helpline: 086 1435 722

Website: www.aasouthafrica.org.za

Other organisations which can help:

Foundation for Fetal Alcohol Related Research (FARR): 021 686 2645

PNDSA (Post Natal Depression Support Association):

Helpline: 082 882 0072

Lifeline:

24hr Helpline: 086 132 2322

Website: www.lifeline.org.za



Produced by Antenatal Personal Support Project



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Research and development funded by Cancer Association of South Africa