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Effects of Tobacco on Women's Reproductive Health: Hear It From a Renowned Gynaecologist

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Highlights:

Smoking and non-smoking forms of tobacco have adverse effects on women's reproductive health.

It can lead to infertility and miscarriage.

Quitting tobacco can reduce low birth weight, preterm birth, and premature breakage of the amniotic sac.

Tobacco claims the lives of about 9,81,100 people every year in India, yet more than 1,20,00,000 adults and 25,42,000 children continue to use tobacco in various forms every day (The Tobacco Atlas/India). Even with all the awareness campaigns sweeping the country, the people have been turning deaf ears to the messages.

Recently, in a cutting-edge article, Dr. Duru Shah exposed the [harmful effects of tobacco](#) on women's reproductive health. She had also explained the dangers of exposures to tobacco during pregnancy. Below is our in-depth interview with Dr.Duru Shah on tobacco and women's reproductive health.



EFFECTS OF TOBACCO ON WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Tobacco contributes to infertility

It can also result in premature

‘Smoking can have a huge impact on women’s reproductive health. It is one of the factors that cause infertility and contributes to increased miscarriage rates or still births. - Dr Duru Shah, Gynecologist ’



Dr. Duru Shah is the Scientific Director of Gynaecworld and the Gynaecworld Assisted Fertility Center, Mumbai, India and is a Consultant to the Breach Candy Hospital, Jaslok Hospital and Sir Harkisondas Hospital in Mumbai, where she leads a highly qualified team of Consultants who specialized in assisted reproductive technologies, freezing of embryos, eggs, sperm, semen analysis, egg donation, surrogacy and embryo donation.

Dr. Shah has served as the President of the Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India (FOGSI), and is currently the Senior Vice President of the Indian Society of Assisted Reproduction.

Q. How does a husband's habitual consumption of tobacco (smoking and non-smoking forms) affect the wife's reproductive health?

Ans. We have enough evidence that shows that tobacco exposure both smoking and non-smoking forms have an adverse effect on women's reproductive health.

Second-hand exposure can endanger the health of the mother and the baby. It can result in premature aging of her eggs; smoking can also affect the hormone production and cause inflammatory changes in the fallopian tube.

Men with long-term tobacco exposure can have erectile dysfunction, and damaged DNA in their sperm indirectly affecting a woman's reproductive function.

Q. What are the maternal health effects of smoking on women smokers?

Ans. Smoking can be one of the factors causing [infertility](#). Smoking can also be a contributor to increased miscarriage rates or still birth. Hence, affecting the mother both physically and psychologically.

It may also result in increased chances of a pregnancy that fails to attach to the womb but attaches to the tube (ectopic pregnancy) instead, which always results in the fetal death and can be potentially fatal for the mother.

Q. In your article, you talked about third-hand smoke, could you tell us more about the health consequences of third-hand smoke on babies/children?

Ans. Exposure to second or third-hand smoking can have various adverse effects on the baby. There is an increased risk of miscarriage, pre-term delivery, and low birth weight babies, [still birth](#) in such situation.

Infants that were exposed to second and third-hand smoking have increased frequency of cold, cough, wheeze and lung infections. They are also more susceptible to allergies compared to their non-smoking counter parts.

These children also have learning difficulty and an altered attention, behavior, and ability to reason and understand.

The health consequences of exposure to smoking does not end in infancy and childhood but continue into adulthood, making them more prone to cancer and heart diseases.

Q. Can smoking cessation make a huge difference for women's health in India?

Ans. Cessation of smoking definitely has benefits

Immediate Effects include

Decreased levels of carbon monoxide in the blood- within 24 hrs.

Improvement in small airway function

Improvement in blood viscosity

Short to medium term

Pregnancy related benefits from cessation are

Decrease in LBW (low birth weight), preterm birth, premature rupture of membranes

Decrease in cardiovascular diseases

Marked reduction in stroke (3-5 years)

Improvement in oral health including cancer

Medium to long term effects are decreased risk of

Lung Cancer

[Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease](#), and

Improvement in male erectile dysfunction and female fertility

In the words of Dr.Duru Shah, "smoking causes infertility as it harms the eggs in women and sperms in men. Consumption of smokeless tobacco during pregnancy leads to premature deliveries and also prevents the babies from growing optimally whilst in the mothers' wombs".

Smoking cessation can help avoid low birth weight, preterm birth, and premature breakage of the amniotic sac, and contributes to infant and maternal health.

Source: Medindia