

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pregnant and Smoking – We Can Help!

Coldwater, MI. For many pregnant women who are expecting, Sunday may be their first Mother's Day and while Mother's Day is often a time for mothers to receive gifts, it can also be a time for a mom-to-be to give a gift to both their babies and themselves. That gift is the gift of being smoke-free!

During 2013, the Michigan Department of Community Health reports that 2,007 babies were born in Branch, Hillsdale and St. Joseph Counties. It also reported that more than one-quarter of those babies (28.6%) were born to mothers who smoked during their pregnancy.

Smoking continues to be the number one preventable cause of premature death in the nation. Smoking during pregnancy has been linked to premature births, low birthweight babies, poor birth outcomes and infant mortality. "Most people know that smoking causes cancer, heart disease and other major health problems," said Steve Todd, Health Officer of the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency. "But when a woman who is pregnant smokes, she not only harms herself, but she is also putting her unborn child at risk."

A recent study showed that women who smoked anytime during the month before pregnancy to the end of the first trimester were more likely to give birth to infants with certain congenital heart defects (CHDs). The association was stronger for mothers who reported heavier smoking during this time period. Many infants with CHDs die in the first year of life, and infants who survive often require numerous surgeries, lengthy

hospitalizations and a lifetime of treatment for related disabilities. “Unfortunately, research suggests that some of these conditions may have been prevented if the mom had been smoke-free during her pregnancy” adds Steve Todd.

Women who smoke should know that in addition to smoking being a possible cause for heart defects, the following are also of concern:

- Smoking makes it harder for a woman to get pregnant.
- Women who smoke during pregnancy are more likely than other women to have a miscarriage.
- Smoking during pregnancy causes major health problems for both mother and baby. For example, smoking is one of the causes of problems with the placenta — the source of the baby's nutrition and oxygen during pregnancy.
- Smoking during pregnancy can cause a baby to be born too early and have low birth weight — making it more likely the baby will become sick or die.
- Babies born to women who smoke are more likely to have a cleft lip or cleft palate — types of birth defects.
- Smoking during and after pregnancy is one of the causes of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

If you are pregnant and smoke, the health department wants to assist you in signing up for the Michigan Tobacco Quitline. When you call, be sure to tell them that you are pregnant. The Michigan Tobacco Quitline:

- Has created a special program **just for pregnant women.**
- **Is free and confidential.**
- Is a proven way to **quit successfully.**
- Is user-friendly
- Provides a **personal Quit Coach.**
- Assists you with creating your own personal plan.
- Provides personal phone contacts to encourage and motivate you.
- Provides inspiring **text messaging.**
- Helps you **earn rewards after every call** that you can use to buy things for you and your baby.

Referrals can be made by contacting your County Health Department Office and requesting assistance or through the Health Department's WIC program. To learn more about being smoke-free or the WIC program, check out our website at www.bhsj.org.

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