



MEDIA RELEASE
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SMALL BABIES DO NOT EQUAL EASIER BIRTHS

Young Aboriginal pregnant women are continuing to smoke while pregnant in the hope that a small baby will make it easier to give birth. As reported in the West Australian this week, young teenage indigenous mothers are eight times more at risk of having a baby succumb to sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). As well as SIDS, smoking while pregnant can increase the risk of the baby developing asthma as well as miscarriage and complications during birth.

The Asthma Foundation of WA co-ordinates the Indigenous Women's Project, which aims to promote the message "Fresh air grows sold babies" and encourages pregnant Aboriginal women and their families to create smoke free environments for their fetus and newborn.

Health Promotion Officer, Amy Murphy said "It is a complete myth that having a small baby will mean an easier birth for you and your baby. In actual fact, a small baby is more likely to become stressed during birth and add further complications to the delivery".

Women who smoke while pregnant need to understand that having a small, unhealthy sized baby not only leads to complications during birth, but can also lead to health problems for the child including asthma, middle ear disease and an increased risk of developing diabetes, heart disease and cancer as an adult.

"Quitting smoking at any stage during pregnancy will provide health benefits for both the woman and her baby, however it is important to know that there is no safe level of smoking" Mrs Murphy explains. "Even a few cigarettes a day means many poisons will be in your growing baby's food supply. There are over 4000 poisonous chemicals in cigarettes and cigarette smoke".

If you need help with quitting smoking or would like more information on the Indigenous Women's Project please contact the Asthma Foundation of WA on 9289 3662 or hpo@asthmawa.org.au. Alternatively please visit the website at www.smokefreebaby.org.au.

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