

PRESS RELEASE

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Fathers-to-be who smoke jeopardize the health of their pregnant partners and unborn children

ZAGREB – Smoking during pregnancy is a well-known risk factor for many pregnancy complications, and an increasing number of women give up smoking for the well-being of their unborn children. But, what about the fathers? A study conducted in Turkey showed that more than a half of fathers-to-be continued to smoke in spite of their partners being pregnant. According to the study published in the new thematic issue of *Croatian Medical Journal*, low birth weight and preterm delivery rate were significantly higher among mothers exposed to active or passive smoking.

The study included 499 pregnant women, out of which 132 (26.5%) were smoking prior to pregnancy. The number of smokers decreased to 49 (9.8%) at the end of pregnancy, which indicates fairly high level of awareness among pregnant women about the harmful effect of smoking on the fetus. Fathers-to-be, however, were much less aware of the potential harm of smoking, or they just did not care: 262 pregnant women reported that their partners continued to smoke at home.

Babies born of mothers who actively or passively smoked during pregnancy had lower birth weight than those born of parents non-smokers. Preterm deliveries were also more frequent among mothers exposed to cigarette smoke. Paternal smoking had no effect on intrauterine growth retardation and prenatal death, although maternal smoking had such an effect.

Smoking poses a threat not only to the infant's health, but also to the health of the mother. Pregnant women whose partners smoked at home had higher risk of pre-eclampsia, one of the serious complications in pregnancy. This condition, marked by sudden edema, high blood pressure and protein in the urine, occurred even more frequently among women passive smokers than among active smokers. Authors of the study explain this seemingly contradictory finding by differences in nicotine metabolism among active and passive smokers and desensitization of nicotinic receptors.

In conclusion, the authors suggest that the adverse effects of smoking on pregnancy should be discussed with pregnant women, as well as with their spouses, during regular check-ups.

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