

What State Surveys Tell Us About Tobacco Use Among Alaska Natives: Implications for Program Planning

This fact sheet highlights findings related to tobacco use among Alaska Native women before, during and after pregnancy. This information is intended to help people who are working to improve the health of Alaska Natives. The information can be used for planning effective programs and educating communities and their leaders about preventing youth from ever starting to use tobacco, helping current users to quit, and decreasing secondhand smoke exposure.

Tobacco Use Prior to Pregnancy

Cigarette Smoking

- Almost half of Alaska Native women (45%) smoke cigarettes prior to pregnancy.
- This translates into about 1,100 pre-pregnancy smokers who have babies each year.

Smokeless Tobacco Use

- About one in five (21%) Alaska Native women use smokeless tobacco prior to pregnancy.
- This translates into about 510 pre-pregnancy smokeless tobacco users who have babies each year.

Tobacco Use During Pregnancy

Cigarette Smoking

- Just over one in four (28%) Alaska Native women smoke cigarettes during the last three months of pregnancy.
- This translates into about 690 babies per year born to women who smoke.

Smokeless Tobacco Use

- About one in five (18%) Alaska Native women use smokeless tobacco during their pregnancy.
- This translates into about 450 babies per year born to women who use smokeless tobacco.

Tobacco Use After Pregnancy

Women are asked about whether or not they use tobacco about 15 weeks after the baby is born.

Cigarette Smoking

- Just over one-third (37%) of Alaska Native women smoke after pregnancy.
- This translates into about 920 women per year who are smoking after pregnancy.

Smokeless Tobacco Use

- About one in five (20%) Alaska Native women use smokeless tobacco after pregnancy.
- This translates into about 490 women per year who use smokeless tobacco after pregnancy.

Preventing Tobacco Use

- Almost half (49%) of female Alaska Native high school students currently smoke cigarettes; preventing tobacco use so that these girls become non-smoking adults would also reduce the proportion of women who smoke during pregnancy.

Quitting Tobacco Use

- Just over one in three (37%) Alaska Native women who smoke before pregnancy are able to quit by their last three months of pregnancy – but about half of them (53%) relapse and are smoking again after their babies are born.
- About one in five (20%) Alaska Native women who use smokeless tobacco before pregnancy are able to quit and not use during pregnancy – but about half of them (50%) relapse and are using smokeless tobacco again after their babies are born.
- The clear majority (71%) of Alaska Native women who smoke after pregnancy say that they want to quit.
- Among all Alaska Native adult women who smoke, 63% tried to quit during the past year.
- The leading barriers to quitting reported by Alaska Native women who smoke after pregnancy are nicotine cravings (83%), having other smoke around them (61%) and loss of a way to cope with stress (55%).
- Nicotine replacement therapy (patches, gum, pills or inhaler) is the number one quitting support tool desired by Alaska Native women who smoke after pregnancy (63%).
- About half (47%) of all Alaska Native adult women who use tobacco know about the Alaska Tobacco Quitline: 888-842-QUIT (7848).
- One in four (23%) Alaska Native women who were smoke cigarettes after pregnancy say they are interested in using a telephone quitline for support.

Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

- Almost one in five (17%) of all Alaska Native adult women are exposed to secondhand smoke in their homes.
- A very small proportion (3%) of Alaska Native mothers say that their new baby is ever in the same room with someone smoking, but this may be an underestimate of babies' exposure if smoking occurs anywhere else in the household.

Knowledge and Opinions about Tobacco Control

- Most Alaska Native women who smoke before pregnancy (91%) say that a healthcare provider talked to them during their pregnancy about how smoking could hurt the baby.
- Most Alaska Native adult women (80%) believe that secondhand smoke is “very harmful.”
- About half (51%) of all Alaska Native adult women specifically know that exposure to secondhand smoke causes sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS); 95% know that it causes respiratory problems among children.

More Information about Planning for Tobacco Control

This fact sheet includes highlights from the report *What State Surveys Tell Us about Tobacco Use among Alaska Natives: Implications for Program Planning*. The full report contains information about the health burden of tobacco use among Alaska Natives, trends in tobacco use among Alaska Natives in comparison to non-Native Alaskans, and additional detail about tobacco use indicators such as knowledge of harm, quitting, and opinions about tobacco control programs. Findings in the report are translated into recommendations for program planning.

A full copy of the report, an executive summary and additional fact sheets are available online from the Alaska Tobacco Prevention and Control Program: www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/tobacco

DATA SOURCES: ADULT TOBACCO USE – ALASKA BEHAVIORAL RISK FACTOR SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM (BRFSS), 2004-05 COMBINED; YOUTH TOBACCO USE – 2003 ALASKA YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY (YRBS); SMOKING DURING PREGNANCY – ALASKA PREGNANCY RISK ASSESSMENT MONITORING SYSTEM (PRAMS), 2000-03 COMBINED.

