



Colorado Department  
of Public Health  
and Environment

# NEWS RELEASE

Office of Communications  
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

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## **Smoking during pregnancy on decline, but remains among leading factors in state's low birth weights**

DENVER – Smoking while pregnant and not gaining enough weight during pregnancy are two of the leading preventable causes for women in Colorado delivering babies at a low birth weight. Women's health experts at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment released the findings after a recent analysis of single births in Colorado from 2007-2009.

The good news is that smoking among pregnant women has declined. One in 14 low-weight births was attributed to smoking in the 2007-2009 findings, compared to nearly one in eight low-weight births attributed to smoking in the 1995-1997 findings.

Jillian Jacobellis, Prevention Services Division director at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, said, "Although Colorado has made remarkable improvements in reducing smoking during pregnancy dropping from 11.6 percent to 8.7 percent, no improvements were made in women gaining enough weight during pregnancy."

Jacobellis said women who smoke during pregnancy or who do not gain enough weight significantly increase their risk for having a baby weighing 5 pounds, 8 ounces or less, at delivery.

"These low birth-weight babies are at risk for disabilities, complications requiring longer hospital stays and treatment in intensive care units, and even death. Public health interventions that address these issues are necessary to reduce these numbers," said Jacobellis.

Pregnant women at a normal weight for their height should gain 25 to 35 pounds; underweight women, 28 to 40 pounds; overweight women, 15 to 25 pounds; and obese women, 11 to 20 pounds.

Since the release of the 1995-1997 findings in 2000, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has developed public health campaigns targeted at pregnant women to encourage them to quit smoking and gain adequate weight. Prevention efforts to reduce smoking received the added benefit of statewide policies enacted to decrease tobacco consumption and secondhand smoke exposure.

In January 2005, a tax increase raised the price of cigarettes and tobacco products. In July 2006, Colorado implemented the Clean Indoor Air Act, which prohibits smoking in most indoor public places. These two changes, which apply to all smokers, together with public health efforts to prevent smoking and help smokers quit, “may have encouraged pregnant women to quit smoking during 2007-2009, compared to a decade ago,” said Jacobellis.

For more details about the analysis, visit this interactive online document <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/womens/pdf/MakingProgressOnTippingTheScales.pdf>

To calculate the amount of weight to gain during pregnancy or to find additional information, go to [www.healthy-baby.org](http://www.healthy-baby.org).

Pregnant women who want help quitting tobacco can call the Colorado QuitLine at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) for free assistance through the QuitLine’s special pregnancy program. Participants work with the same personal coach throughout the entire quit process, as well as earn rewards for participating in the coaching calls. Services are available in English or Spanish.