**Press Release**

**Tobacco, drug use in pregnancy can double risk of stillbirth**

**New Delhi, Jan 20, 2017:** Smoking tobacco or marijuana, taking prescription painkillers, or using illegal drugs during pregnancy is associated with double or even triple the risk of stillbirth, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Researchers based their findings on measurements of the chemical by products of nicotine in maternal blood samples; and cannabis, prescription painkillers and other drugs in umbilical cords.

The calculated increased risk of stillbirth for each of the substances examined were:

- Tobacco use — 1.8 to 2.8 times greater risk of stillbirth, with the highest risk found among the heaviest smokers
- Marijuana use — 2.3 times greater risk of stillbirth
- Prescription painkiller use — 2.2 times greater risk of stillbirth
- Passive exposure to tobacco — 2.1 times greater risk of stillbirth

**Padma Shri Awardee Dr. K.K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA** in a joint statement said that, “Stillbirth occurs when a fetus dies at or after 20 weeks of gestation. Smoking while pregnant leads to subtle changes in children's brain development and behavior, because of restricted development in the womb, and large doses of nicotine can damage brain cells. Growth-restricted babies born in such conditions are more likely to have health conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure in early adulthood. Likely exposure to secondhand smoke can elevate the risk of stillbirth, birth weight, premature birth, respiratory disorders, and increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).”

“It's not a choice to be made lightly. Cigarettes contain dangerous concoction of chemicals, such as nicotine, carbon monoxide, and tar. Most of the associated pregnancy complications can be fatal for the mother or the baby. Smoking also more than doubles the risk that an infant will die during, shortly after, or shortly before birth. There is also prominent dose related proportionality in the risk of stillbirth from smoking. If you smoke and are planning to conceive, quitting this dangerous habit should be a priority”, added Dr. Aggarwal.
Other rarer complications from smoking can lead to problems with the placenta or slow fetal development. These issues can also cause a miscarriage or stillbirth or lead to respiratory and cardiovascular problems in the child’s early adulthood.

Source:
- [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4372174/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4372174/)

About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 29 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 53,000 doctors as its members through more than 1650 active local branches spread across the country.

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