

Test your breath

Why carbon monoxide screening matters

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous gas which you can't see or smell but which is dangerous to you and your baby.

Exposure can prevent oxygen reaching your baby, slow its growth and development, and can result in miscarriage, stillbirth and sudden infant death.

Exposure can be measured through a quick and simple breath test provided by your midwife. The test will give you a number which measures the amount of carbon monoxide in parts per million (PPM).

0-3

Your recent level of exposure to carbon monoxide is low.

This shows little exposure to carbon monoxide in the last 24-48 hours.

4+

You have had some recent exposure to carbon monoxide.

This suggests you have had recent exposure to carbon monoxide and this may be of concern.

Exposure

Exposure to carbon monoxide is usually from one of three ways:

- Cigarette smoke
- Faulty or poorly ventilated cooking or heating appliances (this includes gas, coal, wood and paraffin appliances)
- Faulty car exhausts

If you or anyone in your home smokes, this is the most likely explanation for the high reading.

Reducing your exposure to cigarette smoke is the most important thing you can do for you and your baby's health.

This may be by quitting smoking yourself or reducing your exposure from others, by asking smokers not to smoke in the home, car or in front of you.

Once you stop, the carbon monoxide clears from your bloodstream and that of your baby, allowing a good flow of oxygen to support their growth and development.

Your midwife can discuss options to help you, including referring you for help to stop smoking. To find out more about the free support available, call the *NHS Smokefree helpline on 0300 123 1044 (minicom 0300 123 1014)*. Or visit the Smokefree website at www.smokefree.nhs.uk

If you are not usually exposed to cigarette smoke, but you have a reading of 4 or more, you may have been exposed to carbon monoxide through faulty heating or cooking appliances.

We strongly recommend that you get expert help from the Gas Safety Advice Line *0800 300 363*.

It is important to check that your heating and cooking appliances are safely installed. You may wish to buy a carbon monoxide alarm that will detect low levels of carbon monoxide in your home.

Produced by the Smoking in Pregnancy Challenge Group

To get free week-by-week pregnancy tips you can trust from NHS experts visit www.nhs.uk/start4life

