

# HEALTH MATTERS

## Quit Smoking Help Missing from Prenatal Care

### Study also looks at disparities among racial groups

Almost 60 percent of pregnant women who smoked said they did not get optimal help quitting smoking as part of their prenatal care, according to a recently published study from the Oregon Health Division.

"We can do better than 60 percent. Maternal smoking during pregnancy has become the most preventable cause of poor birth outcomes, such as low birth weight, in the United States," said Sarah Tran,

principal author of the study. "Also, pregnancy is a time when women may be more motivated to make healthy lifestyle changes."

Tran said that women who are pregnant may be more receptive to the Five A's, a best-practice smoking intervention. This practice involves a health care provider asking a woman about her smoking status, advising her to quit, assessing her willingness to quit, assisting quit efforts, and arranging for follow-up visits.



Tricia Tillman

The report also looked at racial disparities in whether women were given smoking cessation information during their pregnancy. Improv-

ing health equity in Oregon is one of the main strategies in the Action Plan for Health, which was recently submitted to the Oregon Legislature.

"Racial differences in health outcomes are costly, unacceptable and preventable," said Tricia Tillman, director of the Oregon Health Authority's Office of Multicultural Health and Services. "We need to address racial disparities throughout the health care system. By focusing on culturally relevant strategies, as this study suggests, we can reduce these disparities."

Black women reported receiving the most smoking cessation coun-

seling during their pregnancy, followed by white women.

But the study found that pregnant American Indian women were most likely to not receive a full spectrum of counseling to quit smoking, even though they are twice as likely to smoke as the average Oregon woman.

It is not known exactly why American Indian mothers were the least likely to receive help in quitting smoking, but the disparity shows there is a need for prenatal care providers to address tobacco use — especially those who care for Native American women, researchers said.

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## New Guidelines Cut Daily Salt Food industry responsible for most consumption

(AP) — The government is telling half of the U.S. population to drastically cut their daily salt intake.

That's the advice to consumers — and the food industry — as the government issues new dietary guidelines, which are the recommendations behind the popular food pyramid.

For the first time, the Agriculture and Health and Human Services departments, which issue the guidelines every five years, are telling people who are 51 and older, all African-Americans and anyone suffering from high blood pressure, diabetes or chronic kidney disease to cut the amount of sodium they eat daily to little more than half a teaspoon.

That group includes about half of the population and those who are most at risk of having higher

blood pressure due to the amount of salt they eat. For everyone else, the government continues to recommend about a teaspoon a day — 2,300 milligrams, or about one-third less than the average person usually consumes.

The assault on salt is aimed strongly at the food industry, which is responsible for the majority of sodium most people consume.

Most salt consumption doesn't come from the shaker on the table; it's hidden in foods such as breads, chicken and pasta.

It has long been known that too much sodium increases the risk of high blood pressure, stroke and other problems. But cutting the salt won't be easy.

"I think it's important for us to do this in a way that doesn't create an immediate backlash," he said.

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