



Pointers For Parents-To-Be

National Partnership Helps Pregnant Smokers Kick The Habit

(NAPSA)—Health researchers are finding that simple new programs could mean healthier Americans for generations to come.

Consider the case of Stephanie Conner. She started smoking at age 14, and at times smoked as much as a pack and a half a day.

Several years later, during her first pregnancy, Conner quit smoking because it made her nauseated, but started again soon after giving birth. After the death of her uncle, a lifelong smoker who died of emphysema and lung cancer, Conner decided to quit if she became pregnant again.

In the early stages of her second pregnancy, Conner enrolled in a cessation counseling program, which she said was effective in helping her to quit.

“I would have never made it if I didn’t have the support and the people to talk to about how hard it was,” said Conner.

Conner met or talked with her nurse at least every two weeks during her pregnancy, and she received a gift bag at the start of her program with items that would keep her hands and mouth busy when she craved a cigarette. With the support of her husband and her nurse, Conner remains smoke free.

Conner is not alone. An estimated 20 percent of women smoke during pregnancy, which causes 20 percent of all low-birth-weight births and 10 percent of infant deaths each year. Research shows that many pregnant smokers want to quit but do not know where to get the help and support they need to do so.

The National Partnership to Help Pregnant Smokers Quit, a coalition of more than 40 organizations, hopes to reduce the number of pregnant smokers through a nationwide effort to reach women, providers, and communities.

“Quitting smoking is the most



important thing a pregnant woman can do to improve both her health and the health of her unborn child,” said Cathy Melvin, Ph.D., M.P.H., National Partnership chair. “The Partnership is working to provide pregnant smokers with the help they want and the support they need to quit smoking.”

The cornerstone of the National Partnership’s efforts is a counseling approach, used during regular prenatal care visits, which has proven to double or even triple quit rates. Pregnant smokers who would like materials and referrals to resources should visit www.smokefreefamilies.org for more information. The site also has information for those who want to support a pregnant smoker they know. In addition to tips on how to help a pregnant smoker during her quit attempt, the site also allows users to send personalized e-cards that offer supportive messages for pregnant smokers.

For extra help quitting smoking during pregnancy 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, pregnant smokers can call the Great Start Quitline, managed by the American Cancer Society, toll-free at 1-866-66-START. They can also get help by calling the Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies phone line at 1-800-311-BABY (English) or 1-800-504-7081 (Spanish).