

Why do we ask people to stop smoking?

1. To increase chances of a placement

Adoption Agencies are required to take into account the Government view that there should be no “blanket bans” when considering applications from prospective adopters. However, as a voluntary adoption agency we need to consider carefully whether a local authority adoption panel is likely to approve a match between a child or children and a prospective adopter who smokes. Social Care professionals who make placement decisions on behalf of vulnerable children must give high priority to the present and future health of those children. There is likely to be particular concern in relation to a child under five years or with any pre-existing health condition (eg asthma).

2. Promotion of healthy lifestyle and protecting long-term health

We want our adoptive parents to be fit and healthy, ready for the challenges of parenting, now and for as far as possible into their child’s future. Stopping smoking is the single most important thing any adult can do to protect their health and increase their life expectancy. As well as adding years to your life it will reduce your risk of many health conditions, from lung cancer and heart disease to losing your sight. You’ll feel fitter and healthier too.

3. Reducing risks of health problems in our children

Second-hand smoke carries significant risks to the health of children. This is the smoke that a smoker breathes out, which contains about 4,000 chemicals.

Even if you, or others, smoke outside, your children are still exposed to these chemicals on your breath. There is also a risk from ‘third-hand smoke’ which is the toxins left behind where you have smoked, e.g in the upholstery of car seats. Second and third-hand smoke increase the risk to children of:

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
- ear infections
- coughs and colds
- respiratory problems such as pneumonia
- tooth decay
- Asthma attacks if asthmatic
- long term - poor lung development, lung cancer, heart disease and cataracts.

4. Role modelling behaviour

If children grow up around people who smoke they are more likely to become smokers themselves.

How long do I need to have stopped for?

We ask all applicants to have stopped for at least six months before reaching Stage 2. This is to ensure there is a clear 12 months prior to any child being placed.

We know that people who quit for 12 months have a significantly reduced risk of returning to smoking in the future.

What about e-cigarettes?

E-cigarettes are a useful tool which have helped many people successfully quit smoking. However, we do not know yet if there are long-term risks. It is likely that their temporary use as an aid to stopping smoking will be associated with less risks than smoking tobacco. At present we do not know the risks to children who are around people who use them and there is the same risk of modelling unhealthy behaviour. We therefore request that applicants have also stopped using e-cigarettes by the time they submit a Registration of Interest form.

What support is available?

For more advice and information access support from the NHS at www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking
