

Second-Hand Smoke

The danger to your child

Smoking can harm even those who don't smoke, especially infants and children.

About 38 percent of children are exposed to second-hand tobacco smoke in their homes. If you live in an apartment building, tobacco smoke from other apartments can seep in through the ventilation system and affect your children.

Some toxic substances are found in stronger concentrations in second-hand tobacco smoke than in smoke that goes directly into a smoker's lungs.

A child exposed to second-hand smoke is at higher risk for a long list of health problems, ranging from bronchitis and pneumonia to cancer and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

If you smoke, quitting is the best thing you can do – for yourself and your child.

But, if you don't quit, you should not smoke in your home or car or anywhere else where your child can breathe the second-hand smoke.

On Back

How smoking and second-hand smoke can harm your baby, child, even your unborn infant.

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You & Your Child



The danger to your child

Young children are very vulnerable to the dangers of tobacco smoke

Young children are especially vulnerable to second-hand tobacco smoke for several reasons.

- They breathe more air relative to body weight and absorb more of the toxins than an adult breathing the same amount of smoke.
- They are less able to complain about the smoke because they are too young, or because their complaints are ignored.
- Their immune system is less protective than an adult's.
- They are less able to remove themselves from a place where they are being exposed to second-hand smoke.

Breathing second-hand smoke puts a baby at higher risk for SIDS

Exposure to smoke appears to increase the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden and unexplained death of an infant under 1 year of age. It is blamed for the death of nearly 5,000 babies a year in the United States.

The cause of SIDS is still not known.

But studies report that babies exposed to second-hand smoke are twice as likely to have SIDS.

Second-hand smoke may increase the risk of SIDS because of the way it affects a child's cardio-respiratory control. Some infants who have died from SIDS had thicker inner airway passages than infants of non-smoking mothers.

Tobacco smoke makes children's ear infections more common

Middle ear infections are more likely to be a problem among children who are exposed to second-hand tobacco smoke.

For one thing, breathing second-hand smoke tends to increase the amount of fluid in the middle ear, which makes infection more likely.

Asthma and bronchitis are more common when second-hand smoke is in the air

Exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke increases the likelihood of asthma, wheezing, and chronic bronchitis in children between 2 months and 5 years of age and increases the likelihood of asthma in children between the ages of 3 and 5.

The American Academy of Pediatrics reports that children who breath second-hand smoke suffer from asthma, wheezing, and chronic bronchitis more than children who are not exposed. Studies suggest second-hand smoke may lead to serious chest illness in young children.

Second-hand smoke is linked to other health problems in children

Second-hand smoke has also been linked to:

- Reduced lung functioning.
- Cancer in childhood.
- Slower growth.
- Upper respiratory tract infections, such as colds and sore throats.

If You Are Pregnant

Pregnant women who smoke run the risk of harming their unborn babies. About 24 percent of children are exposed to the dangers of tobacco and smoking before they are born because their mothers smoke.

A mother's smoking can affect the fetus because it deprives the fetus of oxygen and other necessary nutrients. The result of this can be:

- Complications in pregnancy.
- A spontaneous abortion (miscarriage).
- Stillbirth.
- A low-birth-weight newborn.
- Reduced lung function in the baby.

Smoking during pregnancy also increases the chances of your baby dying from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. In fact, mothers who smoke during pregnancy are three times more likely to have a SIDS baby.

