

Secondhand Smoke

Secondhand smoke comes from 2 places:

- 1) Smokers
- 2) Burning cigarettes, pipes, and cigars

Even if *you* don't smoke, breathing in someone else's smoke can kill you.

Secondhand smoke has about 4,000 chemicals in it. More than 50 of them cause cancer.

In the United States each year, thousands of **nonsmokers** die from secondhand smoke.

- About 3,000 die from **lung cancer**.
- More than 20,000 die from **heart disease**.

Secondhand Smoke and Your Young Child

Millions of children breathe in secondhand smoke at *home*. Secondhand smoke is especially bad for children because their lungs are still growing.

Babies have a higher risk of **SIDS*** (sudden infant death syndrome) if they breathe in secondhand smoke.

Children have a higher risk of serious health problems if they breathe in secondhand smoke. For example, children who breathe secondhand smoke can have:

- More ear infections.
- More nose, throat, and sinus (SYE-nis) infections.
- More lung infections like **bronchitis*** and **pneumonia***.
- More tooth decay (cavities, also called caries).
- More learning problems in school.

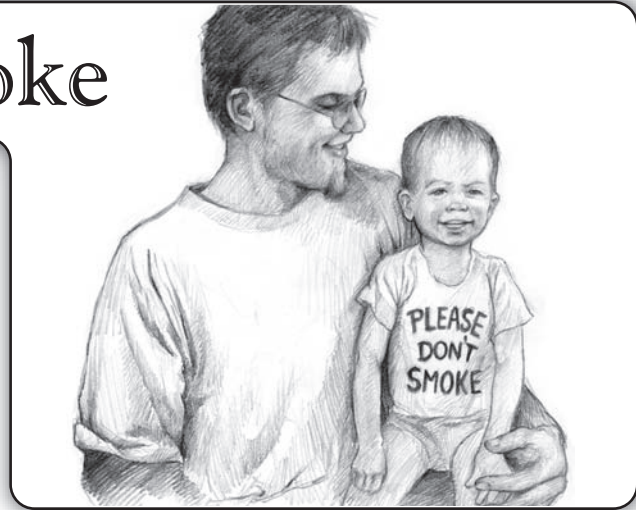
* Words to Know

bronchitis (brahn-KYE-tis)—an infection of the tubes that carry air into the lungs.

pneumonia (nuh-MOH-nyuh)—an infection of the lungs.

SIDS—short for sudden infant death syndrome. It's when a baby younger than 1 year dies during sleep and doctors can't figure out why.

wheeze (weez) or **wheezing** (weez-ing)—high-pitched whistling sound when breathing.



Children who breathe secondhand smoke cough and wheeze* more. They have a harder time with colds, stuffy noses, headaches, sore throats, itchy eyes, and hoarseness.

Secondhand smoke can make bad health problems even worse. **Secondhand smoke is especially bad for children with asthma.** It may cause more asthma attacks. And the attacks may be worse, leading to trips to the hospital.

Secondhand Smoke and Your Child Over Time

Secondhand smoke can cause problems for children later in life, such as:

- Lung cancer.
- Heart disease.
- Cataracts (an eye disease).

Children who grow up with parents who smoke are more likely to smoke too. Children and teens who smoke have the same health problems as adults.

How to Protect Your Child From Secondhand Smoke

- **Make your home smoke-free.** Smoke travels everywhere, from room to room, upstairs and downstairs. It gets into furniture and rugs. Ask people not to smoke in your home. Don't put out any ashtrays. Don't smoke inside your home.
- **Make your car smoke-free.** Opening windows isn't enough to clear the air. Don't smoke in your car or let other people smoke in your car.

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- **Keep your children away from places where there are smokers.** Sit in “no smoking” parts of public places. Eat at smoke-free restaurants.
- **Choose a babysitter who doesn’t smoke.** Smoke can “hide” in hair and clothes. Make sure your babysitter knows that nobody can smoke around your children! Think about changing babysitters if your babysitter smokes.
- **Encourage smoke-free child care and schools.** Help your children’s school or child care become smoke-free. That includes outdoor areas and teachers’ lounges. Get your children involved to make schools smoke-free!

Secondhand Smoke and Your Unborn Baby

When you’re pregnant, your baby shares your blood. When you breathe in smoke, the smoke gets into your bloodstream, and gets to your baby.

If **you smoke** when you’re pregnant, your baby “smokes” with you. This can lead to:

- **Miscarriage** (losing the baby)
- **Premature birth** (“preemies”—born early and not fully developed)
- **Low birth weight** (which can mean a less healthy baby)

The health risks to your baby go up the longer you smoke and the more you smoke. Quitting during pregnancy helps your baby. The sooner you quit, the better!

Even if you don’t smoke, breathing in secondhand smoke can hurt your baby. All pregnant women should stay away from secondhand smoke. Ask smokers not to smoke around you.

Choosing to Quit Why?

Quitting smoking is one of the most important things you can do for your own health. It is also the best way to protect your children from secondhand smoke.

Set an example. If you smoke, quit now! Children are more likely to try smoking if you are a smoker.

How?

- Talk with your doctor to get help. There are medicines that can help you quit.
- You may want to join a stop-smoking class.
- Ask a friend to join you in your fight to quit.
- Call 1-800-784-8669 (1-800-QUIT-NOW) to reach the Telephone Smoking Quitline in your state. Go to www.naquitline.org to learn more.
- Contact the American Lung Association (www.lungusa.org), American Heart Association (www.americanheart.org), or American Cancer Society (www.cancer.org) to learn about support groups where you live.

Fire Safety

Children can get burned playing with lit cigarettes, lighters, or matches. Even children younger than 5 years can start a fire. Lighters are especially dangerous. Some lighters are “child-resistant.” But that does *not* mean they are *childproof*. They are just harder for children to use.

- Never let anyone smoke while holding your child. Your child may get burned.
- Never leave a lit cigarette, cigar, or pipe alone. Your child may play with it.
- Keep matches and lighters out of your child’s reach.

To learn more, visit the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Web site at www.aap.org.

Your child’s doctor will tell you to do what’s best for your child. This information should not take the place of talking with your child’s doctor.

We hope the resources in this handout are helpful. The AAP is not responsible for the information in these resources. We try to keep the information up to date but it may change at any time.

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