

Kids and Secondhand Smoke

While everyone knows about the dangers of smoking, far fewer know that secondhand smoke—the smoke in the air from burning tobacco—is especially dangerous to children. Unfiltered by a smoker's lungs or a cigarette filter, secondhand smoke has high levels of dangerous tar, nicotine, carbon monoxide, and ammonia.

If your child is around smokers, here are some important things to consider:

Children exposed to secondhand smoke are sick more often than other children.

- They develop more cases of the flu, bronchitis, and pneumonia, and are hospitalized more often. They also miss more school, cough and wheeze more, and have more trouble getting over colds.
- Secondhand smoke can harm lung development and function. Infants and toddlers are especially at risk.
- Secondhand smoke can cause a buildup of fluid in the middle ear.
- Secondhand smoke is a risk factor in the onset of asthma. For asthmatic children, it can cause more frequent and severe attacks.

Adults need to protect children from secondhand smoke.

- Don't smoke or let anyone else smoke in your house or in your car—especially if children are present.
- If a family member insists on smoking, open the windows or use an exhaust fan.
- Be sure that babysitters or others don't smoke around your children.
- Work with your school to educate other adults about the importance of keeping children's environments smoke-free.