

Secondhand Smoke and Children

Smoking and secondhand smoke (SHS) exposure are leading causes of preventable death and can harm a person at any stage of life—before birth, infancy, childhood, adolescence, and even adulthood. Some health effects can last a lifetime. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that all children be protected from tobacco smoke. Parents and caregivers should know how to protect children from these dangers.

Secondhand Smoke and Pregnancy

- In pregnant women, smoking and exposure to SHS contributes to low birth-weight babies, preterm delivery, colic, stillbirth, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)^{1,2}
- Smoking during pregnancy can also cause the following conditions:³
 - Orofacial clefts (cleft lip, cleft palate) in the baby
 - Placentae previa (the placenta covers some or all of the cervix, causing bleeding and pre-term labor)
 - Placental abruption (placenta detaches from the uterus causing bleeding in the mother and anything from increased heart rate to stillbirth in the fetus)

Secondhand Smoke Exposure

- 2 in 5 children in the US are exposed to SHS, including 7 in 10 black children⁴
- More than one third of US nonsmoking youth aged 3-17 were exposed to SHS, as measured by cotinine in the blood⁵
- Children exposed to SHS are at risk of asthma, breathing problems, tooth decay, pneumonia, ear aches, sleep problems, and developmental delays^{4,6,7}
- SHS exposure can harm children's vision⁸
- Several markers of cardiovascular risk have been found in toddlers exposed to SHS⁹
- Smoking by parents or caregivers in the home is a common way that young children are exposed to SHS
- Young children are at risk from their own behaviors: children ingest dust and smoke particles when crawling on floors and carpets, or when putting their hands in their mouth after touching a surface where smoke has settled
- Multi-unit housing is a concern for SHS exposure. When someone smokes in a nearby unit, the smoke travels through ventilation systems and common areas, exposing children and other nonsmokers to SHS
- Smoking in a different room, using fans, or smoking in front of an open window does not prevent SHS exposure: to protect children and other nonsmokers, tobacco users should only smoke outside
- Implementation of smoke-free legislation is linked to lowered risk of premature births and low birthweight^{10,11}

How to Protect against Secondhand Smoke

- Do not allow smoking or e-cigarette use inside your home or car
- Do not allow smoking or e-cigarette use near you, your children, or your pets
- The only way to completely protect against SHS is to quit smoking. Talk with your child's pediatrician about ways to keep your child safe from SHS

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