

How smoke affects the health of you and your child

What is secondhand smoke?

Secondhand smoke is the smoke breathed out from the lungs of smokers. It is also the smoke that comes from the burning end of a cigarette, cigar or pipe.

The smoke from the burning end of a cigarette is more dangerous than the smoke the smoker breathes out.

Secondhand smoke has more than 7,000 substances and 70 of them are known to cause cancer. There is not a safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Even a small amount can be harmful to health. The effects of being around tobacco smoke are especially harmful to young children. This is because their bodies and organs are still in developmental stages.



What can it cause?

Secondhand smoke causes:

- About 41,000 deaths each year from lung cancer in people who do not smoke.
- Irritation of the eyes, nose and throat.
- Lung irritation that can lead to coughing, a lot of phlegm, and pain.
- Possible chest pain and heart problems.

How can it hurt my child?

Children who inhale secondhand smoke are more likely to:

- Get pneumonia, bronchitis and chest colds.
- Get ear infections, eye soreness, hoarseness, headaches and sore throats
- Be fussy and cry.
- Cough, sneeze, congestion and wheeze.
- Have a harder time getting over a cold.
- Develop asthma and have more asthma attacks.
- Have a greater risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).
- Have tooth decay.

Long-term effects of Secondhand Smoke

Children who grow up with parents who smoke are more likely to smoke. Children and teens who smoke are affected by the same health conditions affecting adults. Secondhand smoke can cause problems for children later in life.

These include:

- Poor lung development (the lungs do not grow to their full potential)
- Lung cancer
- Heart disease
- Cataracts (eye disease)

How can I protect my family?

In the home:

- Set the example – Quit smoking.
- Remove children from places where smoking is allowed, even if no one is smoking while the children are there. Teach children to stay away from secondhand smoke.
- Make the home smoke-free – don't smoke inside or anywhere near the children, even if the smokers are outside.
- Make the car smoke-free.
- Chooses a babysitter who does not smoke

Where can I get help to stop?

Classes to help you stop smoking are offered by:

- American Lung Association of Wisconsin
800-586-4872
- Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line
800-784-8669

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.