

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.

Before, At, and After Birth

- In pregnant women, smoking and exposure to SHS contributes to low birth-weight babies, preterm delivery, colic, stillbirth, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Smoking during pregnancy can also cause:
 - 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 heartrate to stillbirth in the fetus)

Secondhand Smoke Exposure

- 2 in 5 children in the US are exposed to SHS, including 7 in 10 black children
- Children exposed to SHS are at risk of asthma, breathing problems, tooth decay, pneumonia, ear aches, sleep problems, and developmental delays
- Smoking by parents or caregivers in the home is the most common way young children are exposed to SHS
- Young children are also at risk from their own behaviors- crawling on floors and carpets is an easy way to ingest dust and smoke particles, as is putting hands in mouth after touching a surface (walls, floors, furniture) where smoke has settled
- Multi-unit housing like apartments or condos is also a danger- when someone smokes in a nearby unit, nonsmokers are exposed to SHS- more than 1 in 3 nonsmokers living in rental housing are exposed to SHS
- Smoking in a different room, using fans, or smoking in front of an open window does not prevent SHS

How to Protect against Secondhand Smoke

- Do not allow smoking inside your home or car
- Do not allow smoking near you, your children, or your pets
- Ask anyone who cares for your child or pet to follow these rules- and tell them why
- E-cigarette vapor or aerosol also contains chemicals. Do not let anyone use e-cigarettes in your home, car, or near your child or pet
- The only way to completely protect against SHS is to quit. The AAP recommends talking to your child's pediatrician about ways to keep your child healthy