

The Effects of Secondhand Smoke on Children

“The scientific evidence is now indisputable: secondhand smoke is not a mere annoyance. It is a serious health hazard that can lead to disease and premature death in children and nonsmoking adults.” – U.S. Surgeon General, Vice Admiral Richard H. Carmona, M.D., M.P.H., F.A.C.S. (June 2006)

Secondhand Smoke is Toxic

- Secondhand smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals, including formaldehyde, ammonia, lead, chromium, benzene and arsenic. More than 70 of these chemicals can cause cancer in humans.

Unborn Babies and Infants are at Risk

- Smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke during pregnancy can lead to a low birth-weight baby and can reduce a baby's lung function.
- During pregnancy, many of the compounds in secondhand smoke change the way a baby's brain develops.
- Babies who breathe secondhand smoke have weaker lungs. Their breathing problems can continue as they grow older and even when they become adults.
- Mothers who smoke during pregnancy are more likely to have their babies die of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).
- Babies who breathe secondhand smoke after they are born also are more likely to die of SIDS.

Children are at Risk

- Children who breathe secondhand smoke are more likely to suffer from pneumonia, bronchitis, wheezing and coughing spells, ear infections, and more frequent and severe asthma attacks.
- The lungs of older children who breathe secondhand smoke grow less, causing breathing problems.

How To Protect Children

- If you smoke, quit. Contact NDQuits at 1.800.QUIT.NOW (1.800.784.8669) or www.ndhealth.gov/ndquits for help.
- Do not allow anyone to smoke near your child, including babysitters and family members.
- Do not allow anyone to smoke in your home or car. Opening a window does not protect children from secondhand smoke.
- Do not take your children to any public places that allow smoking.
- Talk to your children about the dangers of tobacco and secondhand smoke.

NDQuits
1.800.QUIT.NOW
www.ndhealth.gov/ndquits

Source:

2006 Surgeon General's Report, The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke

For more information, contact:
Tobacco Prevention & Control Program
North Dakota Department of Health
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 301
Bismarck, N.D. 58505-0200
701.328.3398 or 800.280.5512 / www.ndhealth.gov/tobacco

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