

# TOBACCO *Facts*

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## 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](http://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.



Source: 2006 Surgeon General’s Report, *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke*