

FACT SHEET:

tobacco smoke exposure



The facts

Tobacco smoke is a mixture of more than 4000 chemicals which can reach the brain, heart and other organs within 10 seconds of the first puff.

Many of the chemicals in tobacco smoke can cause cancer.¹

In Queensland, there are on average an estimated 3402 deaths per year attributable to tobacco smoking.¹

What is passive smoking?

Passive smoking, sometimes referred to as second-hand smoke, is breathing in the exhaled mainstream smoke and side-stream smoke.

Maternal smoking^{2,3}

Smoking while pregnant or inhaling second-hand smoke can harm the unborn baby.

Nicotine, carbon monoxide and other toxic chemicals from tobacco smoke are absorbed into the woman's bloodstream and can pass to the unborn baby.

The baby is at increased risk of:

- a lower birth weight
- increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- decreased airway growth with reduced lung function at birth
- increased risk of wheezing during infancy
- thickened airways with increased collagen deposition, which makes airways more twitchy in infancy
- delayed maturation of the immune system at birth, which increases the risk of respiratory infections in infancy and thereby increases the risk of asthma in childhood.

Health effects in children^{2,3}

Young children are very susceptible to tobacco smoke because their lungs and immune systems are still developing.

Babies and children exposed to tobacco smoke are at serious risk of:

- sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- bronchitis, pneumonia and other lung or airway infections
- worsening of asthma
- respiratory symptoms such as coughing and wheezing
- middle ear disease ('glue ear')

- increased susceptibility to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in adult life and increased incidence of cancer.

Children living in houses with smokers are also at increased risk of smoke inhalation and death from house fires caused by burning cigarettes.

Prevention

Do not smoke during pregnancy, while breast feeding or anywhere around children.

If you do smoke, quit!

Make your home and car smoke-free at all times.

NB: Since January 1, 2010, it is against the law to smoke in a car carrying children under the age of 16. A \$200 on-the-spot fine applies.

Third-hand smoke

Chemicals and toxins from cigarettes remain in clothing, furniture, cars, carpets and walls hours to days after a cigarette is put out or the smoker has left.

After smoking a cigarette the toxins on your breath and clothing are still able to harm babies and children.

Sources

1. Qld Health Website: health.qld.gov.au/quitsmoking/smoking_info.asp
2. Pronczuk-Garbino J (ed), *Children's Health and the Environment: a Global Perspective*. World Health Organization, 2005: who.int/ceh/publications/handbook/en/index.html
3. Sly PD, Flack F, *Susceptibility of Children to Environmental Pollutants*, Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences 2008; 1140:163-83.

More information:

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