Secondhand smoke and your child’s health

You know smoking is bad for your health, but you may not realize that secondhand smoke — involuntarily inhaled when other people are smoking — is also bad for your child’s health. If your child has asthma or other lung conditions, secondhand smoke can be even more dangerous. It causes thousands of children to be hospitalized each year.

Whether smoking is your habit — or someone else’s — it’s your child’s health problem. Become familiar with the dangers of exposure to secondhand smoke and know how you can protect your child.

Why is secondhand smoke dangerous?

Secondhand smoke is dangerous because:

• It increases your baby’s risk of death from SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome). Chemicals in secondhand smoke affect a baby’s brain, interfering with how it regulates breathing.

• It increases the risk that your child will develop asthma, a serious, lifelong lung condition

• It can cause your child’s asthma to flare up more often and more severely. A severe asthma attack can put your child’s life in danger.

• It can make your child sick more often with:
  – Ear infections (and more likely to need ear tubes to help prevent infections)
  – Bronchiolitis, a breathing problem that often causes hospitalization for babies and toddlers
  – Pneumonia, a lung infection that can be serious in babies and young children

• It slows your child’s normal lung growth

How can I protect my child from secondhand smoke?

To protect your child from secondhand smoke:

• Don’t smoke in your house — and don’t let anyone else smoke there.

• Don’t smoke in the car. Cracking or rolling down the window won’t protect your passengers.

• Don’t let others smoke around your child. Choose smoke-free daycares and hire babysitters who don’t smoke.

• Teach children to stay away from secondhand smoke. Talk to them about nicotine addiction and the importance of not smoking.
How can I quit smoking?
Quitting smoking will improve both your health and your child’s. It will also make you a great example for your family. Here are some ideas that may help you quit:

– Talk to your doctor about proven resources or medicine to help you kick the habit. E-cigarettes and dissolvable tobacco (like chew, snuff, and snus) are not proven to help people quit smoking or to be less harmful. Studies show that many people end up using both cigarettes and another tobacco product.)

– Call 1.800.QUIT NOW, visit smokefree.gov, or text the word QUIT to IQUIT (47848) from your mobile phone to access the Quitline.

Notes