

Secondhand Smoke

AND YOUR CHILD'S ASTHMA



Secondhand smoke is dangerous for children with asthma. If your child has asthma, you can protect his or her health by avoiding places where smoking is allowed.

What is asthma?

Asthma is a chronic lung disease. During an asthma attack, the airways in the lungs swell and become narrower. Asthma attacks can cause coughing, wheezing, difficulty breathing, and tightness in the chest. Asthma cannot be cured, but it can be controlled.

Asthma in children in North Carolina

One in 10 children in North Carolina have asthma.¹



Asthma attacks

Asthma attacks occur when a person with asthma is exposed to an "asthma trigger" that irritates the lungs. Secondhand smoke is a very common asthma trigger.

What is secondhand smoke?

Secondhand smoke is the smoke that comes from the burning end of a tobacco product, such as a cigarette, pipe, or cigar. It is also the smoke that is exhaled by someone who is smoking. The U.S. Surgeon General has stated there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.³

Asthma is a common reason that children miss school — one in five children with asthma in North Carolina miss two or more weeks of school per year.²



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How does secondhand smoke affect children with asthma?

Because children have smaller bodies and breathe more rapidly than adults, they breathe in more secondhand smoke. This causes children to experience more health effects from secondhand smoke exposure.⁴

Secondhand smoke exposure can cause asthma

- Secondhand smoke causes additional asthma attacks and worsens asthma symptoms.⁴
- Parental smoking can cause asthma in children.³

People with asthma who are exposed to secondhand smoke have worse health

- People with asthma who are exposed to secondhand smoke have more visits to urgent care and the emergency room than those who are not exposed to secondhand smoke. They are also admitted to the intensive care unit more frequently.⁵
- People with asthma who are exposed to secondhand smoke report having lower quality of life than those who are not exposed.⁵

Secondhand smoke exposure costs money

- One study found that smoking and breathing secondhand smoke caused 15 percent of asthma cases among North Carolina middle schoolers. These children's cases cost \$1.34 million per year in medical care.⁶
- The asthma medical costs related to secondhand smoke alone for all North Carolinians are \$26.4 million per year.⁷

KEEP CHILDHOOD SMOKE-FREE

protect kids from secondhand smoke

How can you protect your child?

Make your home smoke-free.

- If you smoke do not smoke when you are near your child; smoke only outside your home, or try to stop smoking completely.
- Ask others not to smoke in your home or car, and ask babysitters and childcare workers not to smoke around your children.
- Avoid places where smoking is allowed.

Smoke-free places protect your child's health

Call Quitline NC at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) for free 24/7 assistance with quitting tobacco use.



1-800-QUIT-NOW
1-800-784-8669

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For more information regarding asthma, please visit www.cdc.gov/ASTHMA and for more information regarding secondhand smoke, please visit www.tobaccopreventionandcontrol.ncdhhs.gov or call (919) 707-5400.



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