



Second Hand Smoke – Second Rate Breathing for Kids

“Smoking?” or “Non?” How often do you hear that phrase when you go to restaurants? Do we give our children that same choice?

Our children deserve to have a choice about the quality of air they breathe. Many children do not have this choice because of their exposure to second hand smoke. Second hand smoke is a combination of smoke from the burning end of a cigarette, pipe, or cigar and smoke exhaled from the lungs of a smoker. Second hand smoke also is called environmental tobacco smoke (ETS). Exposure to second hand smoke is called involuntary smoking or passive smoking.

Passive smoking affects people of all ages, but children suffer greatest from the effects of second hand smoke. The poisons in second hand smoke put children in danger of severe respiratory diseases and can harm the growth of their lungs. The effects of second hand smoke can last a lifetime and can also shorten lives. Approximately 65,000 premature and needless deaths are attributed to regular exposure to second hand smoke annually, including more than 6,000 child deaths.

Second hand smoke does not go away. Your home ventilation systems cannot eliminate second hand smoke. Blowing smoke away from children, moving into another room to smoke, or opening a window may seem to reduce children’s exposure to

second hand smoke but will not protect them from its dangers.

Does your baby, child or teen suffer from these effects of exposure to second hand smoke?

- Increased likelihood of suffering from pneumonia, bronchitis, and other lung diseases
- More ear infections and sore throats than children who are not exposed to second hand smoke
- Increased risk for developing asthma
- Greater numbers and more severe asthma attacks
- Increased risk of lung infections and hospitalization for infants and very young children

Ever wonder why your baby is cranky? One reason might be the noxious fumes in second hand smoke that cause irritation of babies’ ears, nose, throat, sinuses and lungs.

Adults and young people who choose to smoke tobacco products should be aware that passive smoking can harm the development of the fetus and causes spontaneous abortions, stillbirths and birth defects.

You can make and keep your home and community smokefree. Here are some steps you can take:

- Do not smoke or allow others to smoke in your home. Explain the harm of second hand smoke to your family’s health.
- Have gum or mints available in your home as an alternative to smoking by you or others.
- Enroll in a stop smoking program in your area and encourage family members and friends who smoke to quit smoking. Be sympathetic, understanding, and informative. Stress that smoking affects everyone, not just the person who smokes.
- Allow no one to smoke in your car, EVER.

To help parents and care providers to stop smoking, Riley Hospital for Children’s Community Education Department, the Indiana University Cancer Center’s Nicotine Dependence Program, and Smokefree Indiana recently joined together to produce an updated listing of Indiana’s stop smoking programs.

To learn more about stop smoking programs in your area of the state, contact Riley Hospital for Children’s Community Education Department at 317-274-2964 or visit Healthy Habits at www.rileyforkids.org