

Secondhand Smoke Fact Sheet

What is secondhand smoke?

Secondhand smoke (sometimes called environmental tobacco smoke or ETS) is formed from the smoke of a burning tobacco product and the smoke exhaled by the smoker. Secondhand smoke contains more than **4,000 chemicals**, including at least **50 carcinogens**. Many of these chemicals linger in the air after smoking.

How does secondhand smoke affect children?

Although ETS affects everyone, children are especially vulnerable because they are still growing and developing. Pound for pound, children eat, drink, and breathe three times as much as adults.

Studies show that children who breathe secondhand smoke are more likely to have chronic **ear infections, pneumonia, bronchitis, and other respiratory illnesses**. Secondhand smoke can cause children with asthma to suffer more frequent and severe **asthma attacks** when exposed. In addition, secondhand smoke may cause thousands of otherwise healthy children to **develop asthma** each year. Secondhand smoke has also been linked to **sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)**.

How big is the problem?

Children are **most likely exposed to secondhand smoke in their homes and cars**. While smoking at work and in public spaces is on the decline, more needs to be done to protect children in the home.

In the United States, 27 percent of homes with children allow smoking indoors. Each day, **15 million children are exposed** to secondhand smoke in their homes and every year **thousands end up in the hospital**.

What is the Smoke-Free Home Pledge?

By taking the smoke-free home pledge, parents are making a commitment to provide a smoke-free environment for their children by:

1. Choosing not to smoke in their home and car and not allowing others to do so. Infants and toddlers are especially vulnerable to the health risks posed by secondhand smoke;
2. Choosing not to allow childcare providers or others who work in their home to smoke; and,
3. **Choosing to smoke outside until they can quit.** Moving to another room or opening a window is not enough to protect their children.

Parents can take the smoke-free home pledge by calling **toll-free 1-866-SMOKE-FREE** or online at www.epa.gov/smokefree. Parents who take the pledge can receive a smoke-free home kit that includes important information on how to keep a home smoke-free, a certificate, and other pledge reminders.

Until parents quit smoking, this is an easy step to take to help their children. We want parents to know that protecting their children's health is only a step away!

The American Medical Association, Consumer Federation of America Foundation, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are co-sponsoring this multi-year public service advertising campaign. Our goal is to significantly increase the number of smoke-free homes in America.