



National Heart Month Secondhand Smoke Effects on Children

February is National Heart Month and smoking/secondhand smoke plays a large part in the cardiovascular health of both adults and children!

Secondhand Smoke and Your Children's Health

Secondhand smoke increases infants' risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). Secondhand smoke increases children's risk of serious health problems as well as the risk of complications to existing health conditions. Children who are exposed to secondhand smoke often have more:

- Ear infections
- Coughs/colds
- Respiratory issues like bronchitis and pneumonia
- Tooth decay

Children exposed to secondhand smoke often have a harder time getting over colds and tend to cough and wheeze more. These children often have more school absences due to illness. Children with asthma are especially sensitive to secondhand smoke. It may cause more asthma attacks and the attacks may be more severe, requiring trips to the hospital.

Long-term Effects of Secondhand Smoke

Children of smokers often become smokers themselves. Long-term effects of secondhand smoke exposure include:

- Poor lung development
- Lung cancer
- Heart disease
- Cataracts (eye disease)

Creating a Smoke-Free Environment

Set the Example!: If you smoke, quit! While quitting can be a difficult task, talk with your doctor about the different options that are available! ND Quits is another great resource to use for smoking cessation!

Make your home and car SMOKE-FREE!: Until you can quit, don't smoke inside your home and don't smoke anywhere near your children, even if you are outside. Don't put out any ashtrays. Remember, air flows throughout a house, so smoking in even one room allows smoke to go everywhere. Even with the windows down, secondhand smoke is an issue when driving in a car. So until you quit, don't smoke in your car!

Encourage others to quit: If you don't smoke, but others close to you and your children do, encourage them to quit smoking. Until then, insist they do not smoke around your child!

An Important Choice!

If you smoke, one of the most important things you can do for your own health and the health of your children is to stop smoking. Quitting is the best way to prevent your children from being exposed to secondhand smoke.

It may be hard to quit. Talk with your doctor or your child's pediatrician if you need help. There are over-the-counter and prescription medicines that may help you quit. Call **1-800-QUIT-NOW** to be connected to your state quit line- they can refer you to local resources and help you quit.

