

Secondhand smoke and your children



 **Quit**[®]

What is secondhand smoke?

Every time you smoke and you're with children, they are smoking too.

By breathing in your cigarette smoke, they are being exposed to the same dangerous chemicals as you.



What's in cigarette smoke?

Tar

Tar is the sticky brown substance that stains your lungs, fingers and teeth yellow-brown. It contains chemicals that cause cancer.

Carbon monoxide

This poisonous gas reduces the amount of oxygen carried by the blood.

Nicotine

This is the addictive drug in tobacco, and it plays a role in heart disease.

Other chemicals
in cigarette smoke also
contribute to disease.

Many chemicals in smoke harm the lungs by increasing the amount of mucus in the lungs and the risk of infection.

They also damage cilia, the tiny hairs in our lungs that move together in waves to help keep them clean.

There are over
7000 chemicals
in tobacco smoke.

Health effects of breathing in secondhand smoke

It is now known that breathing in other people's tobacco smoke is dangerous to the non-smoker, as well as to the smoker.

Young children have smaller, more delicate lungs than adults, and are therefore more affected by tobacco smoke and the chemicals it contains.

Babies exposed to tobacco smoke are more likely to:

- die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS or 'cot death')
- have weaker lungs
- have serious chest illnesses such as pneumonia and bronchitis
- have wheezing illnesses
- be admitted to hospital.

Children exposed to tobacco smoke are more likely to develop serious illnesses, including:

- asthma, including new cases and worsening of existing asthma
- 'glue ear' (otitis media), an infection and swelling of the ear, which is the most common cause of hearing loss and surgery in children
- meningococcal disease, which can sometimes cause death, mental disability, hearing loss or loss of a limb
- poorer lung function, so they cannot breathe in as deeply or breathe out as hard compared to children of non-smokers.

They are also more likely to miss school due to illness, and are more likely to wheeze, cough and have more phlegm and breathlessness. As well, they are more likely to have breathing difficulties when recovering from an anaesthetic after surgery.

Long-term exposure to other people's cigarette smoke can cause heart disease in adults. The processes causing this disease can start in childhood.

The more heavily you smoke around your child, the more likely your child will suffer health problems due to secondhand smoke.





Quit tips

Once you've decided you want to quit, make sure you're successful by planning before you stop.

- Throw away all cigarettes, lighters and ashtrays in your home and car.
- If your partner smokes, suggest that he or she stops too, or only smokes outside the house. Your children suffer if anyone smokes in your home.
- Plan how to handle the places and events that you know make you want to smoke.
- Talk to your family and friends about how they can help and encourage you to quit.

- Treat yourself with the money you have saved. Your efforts deserve to be rewarded!
- Remember each craving only lasts a few minutes. Use the 4Ds – delay smoking, deep breathe, drink water, do something else.
- If you have a cigarette it's not the end of your quit attempt. A slip-up is a setback, not a defeat.

If you are finding it difficult, call the **Quitline** on 13 7848 for information and support to help you quit smoking.

Or visit our website www.quit.org.au.

Accidents in the home

Poisoning

Cigarettes and cigarette ash are poisonous. A baby or child who eats a cigarette or even just a butt can be very sick. Keep ashtrays and cigarette packs away from your children.

Burns and eye injuries

Many babies and children have suffered burns from cigarettes and cigarette ash. Cigarettes that are alight can inflict serious injuries to children's eyes.

Matches and lighters

Matches and lighters can cause serious accidents, including house fires. Be sure to keep them away from children and out of their reach.

Parents as role models

Children learn from you and copy what they see. Children whose parents smoke are more likely to try cigarettes and to become regular smokers than children whose parents don't smoke. Mothers and fathers both influence their children.

If you don't want them to smoke, set them an example.

The best action parents can take is to quit. Make your home a smokefree zone. If you are having trouble quitting, smoke outside and away from your children. Ask friends and family to smoke outside.





Common fears & myths

“I smoke around my children, but it only hurts me, not them.”

If you're smoking indoors, anyone around you also breathes in the cigarette smoke.

While you continue to smoke, the best way to protect your children is to smoke outside your home.

“If I quit smoking, I'll become irritable and I'll take it out on my kids.”

In the first few weeks after you stop you may feel stressed and grouchy, but this will pass as your body becomes used to being without nicotine.

Warn your family that you might be a bit grumpy for a while and ask them to support you.

If you find these moods difficult to cope with, nicotine replacement therapy products or quitting medications can help reduce these withdrawal symptoms.

“My child may be slightly affected by my smoking, but in the long term it won't do any lasting harm.”

Your children will always be more prone to infection (just like you are) because of living in a smoky environment.

Even worse, a child brought up by one or more parents who smoke is far more likely to take up smoking later on in life, than one raised in a non-smoking household.

**There is help
close by**

Quitline 13 7848

What is Quitline?

The Quitline is a confidential telephone information and advice service. For the cost of a local call (except for mobiles phones), Quit Specialists provide encouragement and support to help smokers quit.

Go online: www.quit.org.au

Quit Victoria's website has a range of information that you can read, interact with and download. Find out more about the Quitline, QuitCoach and QuitTxt.

QuitCoach: www.quitcoach.org.au

QuitCoach is a web-based computer program that asks you questions and helps you quit by giving free personal advice tailored to your needs.

QuitTxt

QuitTxt provides regular SMS messages including tips and encouragement to help you keep on track throughout your quit attempt. To begin, all you need to do is register and complete a brief questionnaire at www.quit.org.au/quittxt

Quit Victoria is a joint initiative of Cancer Council Victoria, the Department of Health & Human Services, the National Heart Foundation and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.



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