



# Secondhand Smoke and the Health of Your Family

By U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7

## Protect Your Home. Protect Your Health.

### What is Secondhand Smoke?

Secondhand smoke is a mixture of the smoke given off by the burning end of a cigarette, pipe, or cigar, and the smoke exhaled by smokers. Secondhand smoke is also called environmental tobacco smoke and exposure to secondhand smoke is sometimes called involuntary or passive smoking. Secondhand smoke contains more than 4,000 substances, several of which are known to cause cancer in humans or animals.

EPA has concluded that exposure to secondhand smoke can cause lung cancer in adults who do not smoke. EPA estimates that exposure to secondhand smoke causes approximately 3,000 lung cancer deaths per year in nonsmokers.

Exposure to secondhand smoke has also been shown in a number of studies to increase the risk of heart disease.

### Serious Health Risks to Children

Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of secondhand smoke because they are still developing physically, have higher breathing rates than adults, and have little control over their indoor environments. Children exposed to high doses of secondhand smoke, such as those whose mothers smoke, run the greatest relative risk of experiencing damaging health effects.

Exposure to secondhand smoke can cause asthma in children who have not previously exhibited symptoms.

Exposure to secondhand smoke increases the risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Infants and children younger than 6 who are regularly exposed to secondhand smoke are at increased risk of lower respiratory track infections, such as pneumonia and bronchitis.

Children who regularly breathe secondhand smoke are at increased risk for middle ear infections.

### Health Risks to Children with Asthma

Asthma is the most common chronic childhood disease affecting 1 in 13 school aged children on average.

Exposure to secondhand smoke can cause new cases of asthma in children who have not previously shown symptoms.

Exposure to secondhand smoke can trigger asthma attacks and make asthma symptoms more severe.

### Protect Your Family

Make your car and home smoke-free. Family, friends or visitors should never smoke inside your home or car.

## How Healthy Is Your Home?



### Secondhand Smoke is Dangerous Protect your Family from Secondhand Smoke

Everyone knows that smoking is bad for smokers, but did you know:

- Breathing in someone else's cigarette, pipe or cigar smoke can make you and your children sick.
- Children who live in homes where people smoke may get sick more often with coughs, wheezing, ear infections, bronchitis or pneumonia.
- Children with asthma may have asthma attacks that are more severe or occur more often.
- Opening windows or using fans or air conditioners will not stop secondhand smoke exposure.
- Secondhand smoke also can cause lung cancer and heart disease.
- The U.S. Surgeon General says that secondhand smoke can cause Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, also known as SIDS.
- Secondhand smoke can cause children to suffer bronchitis, pneumonia, ear infections and more severe asthma attacks.

*You can become a child's hero by keeping a smoke-free home and car. Join the millions of people who are protecting their children from secondhand smoke.*



### Take the Smoke-Free Home Pledge

**By taking the pledge, you:**

- Choose not to smoke in your home and do not permit others to do so. Small children are especially vulnerable to the health effects of secondhand smoke.
- Choose to smoke outside, if you must smoke. Moving to another room or opening a window is not enough to protect your children.  
[www.epa.gov/smokefree/healtheffects.html](http://www.epa.gov/smokefree/healtheffects.html)
- Use resources provided at the following link to find tips on keeping a smoke-free home and car.  
[www.epa.gov/smokefree/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/smokefree/index.html)

### Take the pledge at:

[www.epa.gov/smokefree/pledge/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/smokefree/pledge/index.html)

**EPA Region 7 – 800-223-0425**

### Healthy Homes Community Initiative:

[www.epa.gov/region07/citizens/healthy\\_homes.htm](http://www.epa.gov/region07/citizens/healthy_homes.htm)

To inquire about managing your child's asthma, and for more information on safe and healthy homes and how to receive a healthy homes assessment, contact Children's Mercy Hospital at 816-855-1895.

To inquire about getting your child tested for lead poisoning and for more information on resources to rid your home of lead hazards, contact the Kansas City, Missouri Health Department at 816-513-6048.



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Keep yourself and your children away from places where smoking is allowed. If you smoke, smoke only outside. Ask your doctor for ways to help you stop smoking.

### Remember

Keeping a smoke-free home and car can help improve your health, the health of your children and the health of your community.