

Secondhand Smoke:

What is it, and why is it so dangerous for children?

For Parents

What is it?

Secondhand smoke is the combination of the smoke released from the burning end of a cigarette, cigar or pipe, and the smoke exhaled by the person who is smoking.

Why is it so dangerous?

Secondhand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals. These chemicals include arsenic, formaldehyde, carbon monoxide and benzene - just to name a few. Overall, there are more than 60 chemicals found in secondhand smoke that are known to cause cancer. And according to the 2006 Surgeon General's report, there is no such thing as a safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Breathing even a small amount of secondhand smoke is harmful to your health.

Why is it particularly dangerous for children?

Because their bodies are still growing and developing, inhaling the chemicals in secondhand smoke can be especially dangerous for children. Breathing secondhand smoke slows a child's lung growth and greatly increases a child's likelihood of developing ear infections, more severe and frequent asthma attacks, allergies, bronchitis and pneumonia. And infants exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Where are children breathing secondhand smoke?

Children are most often exposed to secondhand smoke inside their own homes and cars. No matter where children are breathing smoke, it's always dangerous to their health, and children who live with parents or others who smoke indoors are constantly being exposed to dangerous chemicals.

What can you do?

The only safe way to protect children from the harmful chemicals in secondhand smoke is by smoking outside. **Outside the home. Outside the car. And away from children.**

Parents don't have to quit smoking right away to start protecting their children right away.

Additional Web-based Quitting Resources:
www.BecomeAnEx.org BeTobaccoFree.gov