

Health Effects of Secondhand Smoke

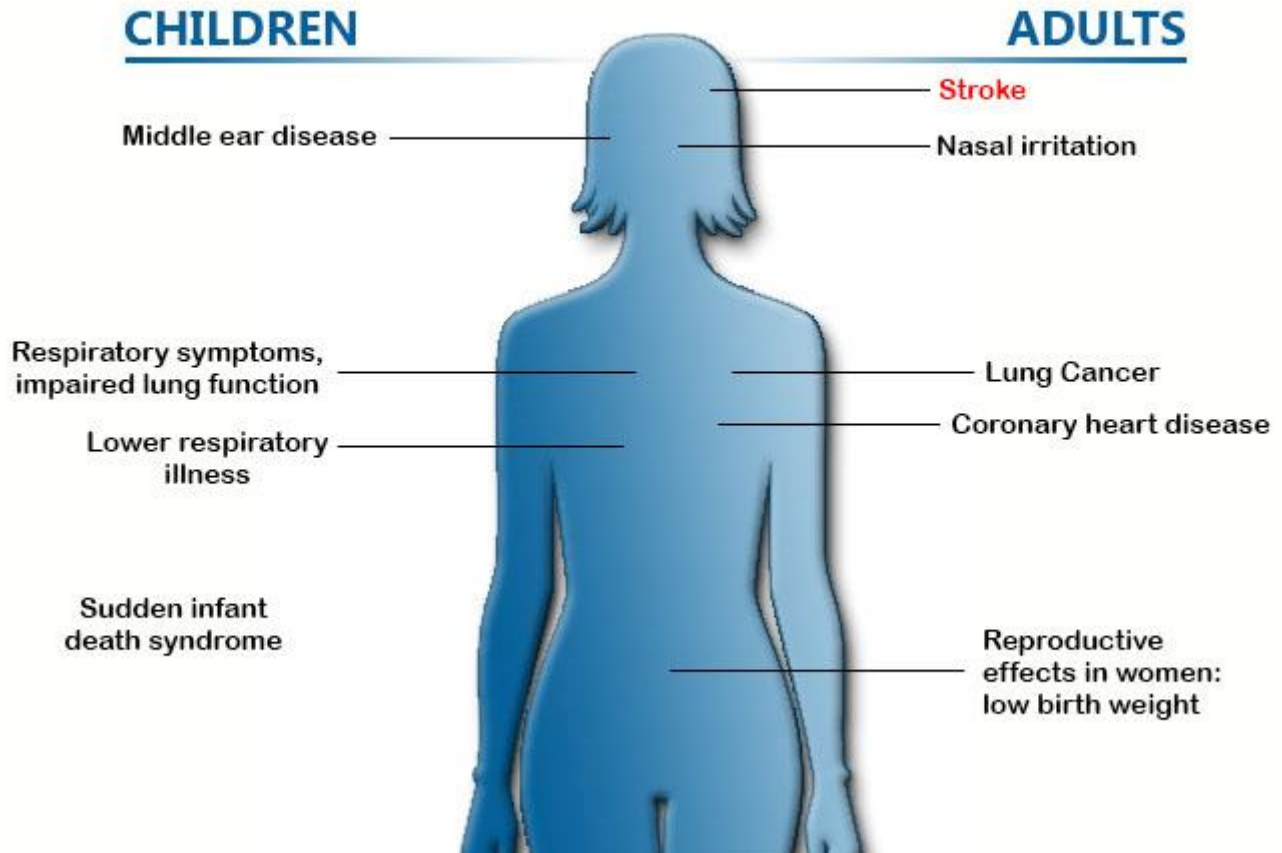
Secondhand smoke is the combination of smoke from the burning end of a cigarette and the smoke breathed out by smokers. Secondhand smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals. Hundreds are toxic and about 70 can cause cancer.

Since the 1964 Surgeon General's Report, 2.5 million adults who were nonsmokers died because they breathed secondhand smoke.

There is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

- Secondhand smoke causes numerous health problems in infants and children, including more frequent and severe asthma attacks, respiratory infections, ear infections, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).
- Smoking during pregnancy results in more than 1,000 infant deaths annually.
- Some of the health conditions caused by secondhand smoke in adults include coronary heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer.

Health Consequences Causally Linked to Exposure to Secondhand Smoke



Secondhand Smoke Causes SIDS

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden, unexplained, unexpected death of an infant in the first year of life. SIDS is the leading cause of death in otherwise healthy infants.⁶ Secondhand smoke increases the risk for SIDS.^{2,4}

- Smoking by women during pregnancy increases the risk for SIDS.^{2,4,7}
- Infants who are exposed to secondhand smoke after birth are also at greater risk for SIDS.^{2,4}
- Chemicals in secondhand smoke appear to affect the brain in ways that interfere with its regulation of infants' breathing.^{2,4}
- Infants who die from SIDS have higher concentrations of nicotine in their lungs and higher levels of cotinine (a biological marker for secondhand smoke exposure) than infants who die from other causes.^{2,4}

Parents can help protect their babies from SIDS by taking the following three actions:⁸

- Do not smoke when pregnant.
- Do not smoke in the home or around the baby.
- Put the baby down to sleep on its back.

Secondhand Smoke Harms Children

Secondhand smoke can cause serious health problems in children.^{2,4}

- Studies show that older children whose parents smoke get sick more often. Their lungs grow less than children who do not breathe secondhand smoke, and they get more bronchitis and pneumonia.
- Wheezing and coughing are more common in children who breathe secondhand smoke.
- Secondhand smoke can trigger an asthma attack in a child. Children with asthma who are around secondhand smoke have more severe and frequent asthma attacks. A severe asthma attack can put a child's life in danger.
- Children whose parents smoke around them get more ear infections. They also have fluid in their ears more often and have more operations to put in ear tubes for drainage.

Parents can help protect their children from secondhand smoke by taking the following actions:⁹

- Do not allow anyone to smoke anywhere in or near your home.
- Do not allow anyone to smoke in your car, even with the window down.
- Make sure your children's day care centers and schools are tobacco-free.
- If your state still allows smoking in public areas, look for restaurants and other places that do not allow smoking. "No-smoking sections" do not protect you and your family from secondhand smoke.

https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/secondhand_smoke/health_effects/index.htm