

Section 2: What works?

Key Messages for Professionals

Passive smoking refers to breathing environmental tobacco smoke breathed out by a smoker or coming from the end of a burning cigarette. Exposure is most likely to occur in the home or car but can also occur in public and social meeting places. The National Drug Strategy Household Survey (2001) reported that 19.7% of households with dependent children allowed smoking in the home.

Children are at higher risk of damage from passive smoking than adults because of their smaller bodies, higher breathing rates and less well-developed respiratory and immune systems.

Passive smoking effects

- **Negative health outcomes for children.** There is considerable evidence to suggest an association between parental smoking and an increased risk of health problems in children, including Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, croup, bronchitis, pneumonia, ear infections, asthma, learning difficulties, behavioural problems, heart disease and meningococcal disease.
- **Smoking uptake later in life.** Children of smokers are four times more likely to end up as smokers themselves, due to nicotine inhalation in childhood.

Research-based strategies for reducing passive smoke for children

Overall there is a lack of research evidence about the effectiveness of interventions designed to reduce passive smoking in children. Further research is needed before strong recommendations can be made about ways to help parents reduce the rates of passive smoking in children. However, the following points are worth keeping in mind:

- Most interventions involve counselling. These have either been simple and relatively non-intense, eg, encouraging parents to quit and giving them written material, or relatively intense, eg, beginning in a clinic, involving follow-up phone calls and possibly home visits.
- Currently intensive counselling for parents is considered the most promising intervention.
- Some practical suggestions about making the home and car smoke-free include the following:
 - Do not allow smoking in enclosed spaces, eg, in the car.
 - Designate smoking areas outside.
 - Remove ashtrays and lighters from the home.
 - Place non-smoking stickers in the home and car.
 - Ask visitors to smoke outside.
- Research supports the effectiveness of a range of interventions with adult smokers. Professionals may decide to try interventions to encourage adults to quit smoking instead of focusing on reducing passive smoking.