

Childcare

and Children's Health

AN INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS



Passive Smoking – How Does It Affect Your Child?

Passive smoking is the inhalation of environmental tobacco smoke – that is breathing in 'other peoples' cigarette smoke. Exposure to passive smoking places children's health at risk of the following conditions:

- Chest infections such as bronchitis, pneumonia
- Ear infections
- Asthma and more serious attacks of asthma
- Irritation to the eyes, nose, throat and airways
- A higher risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Dental decay.

Children who are exposed to passive smoking also have an increased risk of lung disease, lung cancer and heart disease as adults.

New research suggests that children are only safe when cared for in completely smoke-free environments, a home with parents who refrain from smoking both inside and outside the family home.

What can you do to try to keep your child safe from passive smoking?

If you are unable to quit smoking, try to introduce some of the following strategies to reduce harm to your child

- Set up a 'smoke-free' environment' in your family home. Make it a rule for yourself and your visitors that everyone smokes outside away from children.
- Try not to smoke in front of your child – remember you are your child's earliest teacher and that your child will copy your behaviour.
- Never smoke in the family car. Ask your passengers to do the same. In some Australian states it is now illegal to smoke in a car where children are present.

Help to STOP smoking is available

- Seek help from people experienced in the problems of giving up smoking such as your local doctor, pharmacist, community health nurse or child and family health nurse
- Contact your local helpline **QUIT – 13 78 48**
- Access help through the internet at: <http://www.smokinghelpline.com.au/> or <http://www.quit.org.au/> (Victoria), <http://www.quittas.org.au/> (Tasmania), <http://www.quitsa.org.au/asp/index.aspx> (South Australia), <http://www.quitwa.com/> (Western Australia), <http://www.quitnow.info.au/> (Australian Government The National Tobacco Campaign).

Two key messages to remember

- Every cigarette you smoke is damaging to your child's health. Giving up cigarettes is one of the best things you as a parent can do for your child's health and wellbeing.
- It is difficult to quit smoking because the nicotine in cigarettes is powerfully addictive. Help is available to address the challenges of quitting, if you make the decision to stop smoking.

This Parent Fact Sheet is available in different community languages and can be downloaded from the Early Childhood Connections website www.econnections.com.au

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The Royal Children's
Hospital Melbourne



SUPPORTED BY AN
EDUCATIONAL GRANT FROM

Johnson & Johnson
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Health Care for Life

SUPPORTED BY THE
NATIONAL CHILDCARE
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Australian Government
Department of Families,
Community Services and
Indigenous Affairs