
What is passive smoking?

Passive smoking is breathing in:

- The smoke breathed out by smokers (secondhand smoke).
- The smoke from the burning end of a cigarette, cigar or pipe (sidestream smoke).

Passive smoke has many harmful chemicals. The particles are very small and are more likely to reach the tiny air sacs in the lungs. Sidestream smoke does not pass through a filter.

Passive and sidestream smoke are more harmful than the smoke that the smoker inhales.

How can passive smoke hurt my child?

Passive smoke:

- Causes ear infections, colds, sinus infections and sore throats.
- Causes pneumonia, bronchitis, coughs and croup.
- Triggers asthma episodes.
- Can worsen gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).

A child who spends 1 hour in a smoky room with several smokers or in a closed car with 1 smoker breathes in as many harmful chemicals as they would if they smoked 10 or more cigarettes themselves.

Passive smoking is related to sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

- Babies exposed to smoking after birth are 2 times as likely to die of SIDS as unexposed babies.
- Babies exposed both during pregnancy and after birth are 3 times more likely to die of SIDS.

Passive smoke also:

- Irritates the eyes, nose and throat.
- Is linked with chest pain and heart disease.
- Causes 3,000 deaths each year from lung cancer in people who do not smoke.

How can I protect my child, my family and myself?

- Do not smoke in your home. **When you smoke, your family smokes.**
- Insist others do not smoke in your home, including family members, babysitters and visitors.
- Insist that all smokers smoke outdoors, not just in another room. If possible, have the person wear a jacket when smoking outside. Then, have them remove the jacket before going inside.
- Support smokers who are trying to quit.
- Do not allow anyone to smoke in the car.
- Make sure your child's day care, school and after school programs are smoke-free.
- Ask your employer to make sure you do not have to breathe other people's smoke at work.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.