

# Second-Hand Smoke and Children

Second-hand smoke contains over 4,000 substances, 40 of which are known to cause cancer. Some of these are in stronger concentrations in second-hand smoke than in the smoke that smokers inhale directly from a cigarette.

## *Second-hand smoke contains:*

- *Benzo(a)pyrene, found in coal tar*
- *Formaldehyde, used to preserve dead animals*
- *Hydrogen cyanide, used in rat poison*
- *Ammonia, used to clean floors and toilets*

## **Children are especially vulnerable to second-hand smoke because:**

- They breathe more air relative to body weight than adults, thereby absorbing more toxins
- They may be unable to complain if they are too young, or they may be ignored
- Their lungs and immune systems are not yet fully developed
- They are less able to remove themselves from exposure

## **Second-hand smoke has been shown to cause the following health problems in children who are exposed to it:**

- lower respiratory tract infections
- increased fluid in the middle ear
- upper respiratory tract irritation
- reduced lung function

- increased severity and frequency of asthma attacks
- reduced oxygen flow to tissues

## **Second-hand smoke is also associated with:**

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- acute middle ear infections
- tonsillectomy
- meningococcal infections
- childhood cancers and leukemias
- increased risk of croup, bronchitis and pneumonia
- slower growth
- adverse neurobehavioural effects
- unfavourable cholesterol levels
- initiation of atherosclerosis (heart disease)

*Children whose parents smoke are twice as likely to become regular smokers themselves.*

## **Expectant mothers who smoke, or who expose themselves to second-hand smoke, pass second-hand smoke to the developing child in their womb.**

### **This may result in:**

- deficits in intellectual ability
- behavioral problems
- low birth weight
- miscarriage
- stillbirth
- reduced lung function in the baby
- complications during pregnancy

*(turn over)*



Accountable



Collaborative



Common Goals



Dedicated



Evidence-Based Practice



Wellbeing

*There is no risk-free level of exposure to second-hand smoke for children.*

### **Safety Tips to Protect Children from Second-Hand Smoke**

- If you smoke, quit – it is never too late to quit.
- Never smoke around pregnant women, infants, or children.
- Do not permit smoke in your home or vehicle.
- Ensure that your child's daycare and babysitter's home are smoke-free.
- Opening a window or running a fan or air purifier will not rid the air of toxic, cancer-causing chemicals.
- Never leave a lit cigarette, lighter or matches unattended.
- Clear away ashtrays to prevent children from playing with cigarette butts.
- Remember that children model what they see their parents doing. The best way to prevent your children from smoking is to not smoke yourself.
- Do not take children to public places or events where smoking is permitted.

*The Saskatchewan Government has passed legislation making it illegal to smoke in a vehicle when a child under the age of 16 is present.*

**Adapted from:**



**For more information check the website at [www.saskohc.ca](http://www.saskohc.ca)**