

A smoke-free environment for a healthier family



Your young child looks up to you; he wants to be all that you are. And this includes copying your habits — including bad ones, such as smoking. Prevent your child from picking up this nasty habit and keep him safe from tobacco-related harm

Every year, up to 5.4 million people in the world die as a result of tobacco-related diseases. That is one person in every six seconds! Smoking-related diseases are among the top killers in Singapore. These diseases include cancer, heart disease, stroke and lung diseases. Non-smokers can succumb to these diseases too, as a result of second-hand and third-hand smoke.

What is second-hand smoke?

Second-hand smoke (SHS), also known as passive smoke, involuntary smoke or Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS), is a harmful form of air pollution that causes twice as many deaths as all other types of air pollution put together.

SHS is the combination of two forms of smoke from burning tobacco products:

- **Mainstream smoke:** This is inhaled by the smoker through the filter tip of a cigarette, and then exhaled.
- **Sidestream smoke:** This comes from the burning tip of the cigarette and goes directly into the air that we breathe.

SHS consists of around 85 per cent sidestream smoke and 15 per cent mainstream smoke. Non-smokers who are exposed to SHS absorb nicotine and other compounds just as smokers do. Research has shown that health risks can arise from inhaling SHS.



Why is SHS dangerous?

At least 400 chemicals in cigarette smoke are harmful to humans, and up to 60 are cancer-causing. A non-smoker's lung cancer risk is increased by 25 per cent if he is exposed to SHS at home or at work, and up to 50 per cent in the case of heavy exposure. A non-smoker is also at risk of developing eye, nose and throat irritations, respiratory tract infections and heart disease.

How does SHS affect children?

Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of ETS because they are still developing physically, have higher breathing rates than adults, and have little control over their indoor environments. Mothers who smoke expose their children to the greatest relative risks of damaging health effects.

Children exposed to SHS suffer from:

- Greater incidence of coughs and colds.
- Higher chance of eye and nose irritation.
- Reduced lung growth and function.
- Increased susceptibility to coughs, wheezing and asthma. Children are more likely to develop asthma if a parent smokes.
- More severe and frequent asthma attacks.
- Higher risk of ear and chest infections.

Younger children who are especially sensitive could develop lung diseases such as pneumonia and bronchitis.

As a result of these ailments, a child can miss school, which may result in him performing poorly in school.

What is third-hand smoke?

Opening windows and doors does not protect children from second-hand smoke. Research has shown that toxins from tobacco smoke settle on surfaces such as sofas, curtains, carpets, walls, floors as well as clothing and hair. These toxins, now referred to as third-hand smoke, can take a long while to go away. These particles may get into young children's bodies, through contact while they play or crawl, or while being carried by a smoker.



Do you know...
you are harming
your child



Why is third-hand smoke harmful?

Infants and preschoolers are especially susceptible to third-hand smoke because they may breathe near, crawl and play on, touch, and lick contaminated surfaces. Children's developing brains are affected by very low levels of toxins and they are exposed to the risk of swallowing twice the amount of particles from contaminated surfaces as compared to adults.

Modelling a smoke-free life

There is evidence to show that parental smoking can result in children picking up smoking at an earlier age. The Student Health Survey 2009 conducted by HPB showed that 50 per cent of youth smokers had at least one parent who smoked. Similarly, a study by researchers at Dartmouth College revealed that children with parents who smoked were four times more likely to purchase cigarettes, as compared to children with non-smoker parents.

Quit smoking if you smoke

Therefore, if you do not want your child to pick up the smoking habit, it is crucial to be a positive and tobacco-free role model yourself! If you smoke, it is best to quit.

There is a variety of methods to quit smoking, and you can choose the method which is most suitable for your lifestyle. For more information, call QuitLine at 1800 438 2000 or log on to www.hpb.gov.sg/smokefree. It would be good to also explain to your child why you are quitting and involve him in your journey to quit smoking.

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Talk to your child about the benefits of staying tobacco-free

If your child is old enough to understand, sit him down and explain the facts like how smoking is harmful, its addictive nature and the many benefits of being tobacco-free. Teach him how to stand up to peer pressure if his friends make fun of him for not smoking.

Make your home and vehicle smoke-free

Make it a rule to disallow smoking in your home and vehicle. If you have guests who are smokers, request that they do not light up in your house. Some parents might not feel comfortable about doing this. However, many smokers know that their habit can harm others and if you ask

politely, citing health reasons, they are less likely to take offence. Do not keep ashtrays or cigarettes in your home.

Stay away from Environmental Tobacco Smoke

If you see smokers lighting up at places where smoking is prohibited, approach them and explain to them that they should not smoke here as it is designated as a no-smoking area by law. Inform them how smoking affects your child's well-being — cite an example of health risk to the child, such as a higher risk of contracting coughs/colds. Remember, be polite at all times.

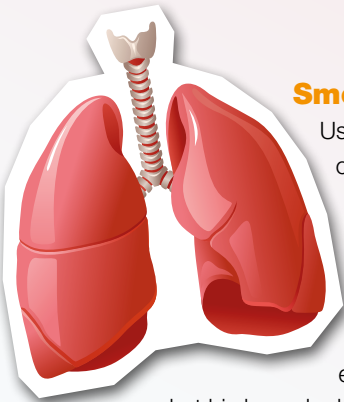
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Parent-Child Activities

Get Active!

With these games, you can help your child learn about the importance of a tobacco-free life



Smoker's lungs

Using pink cardboard or construction paper, cut out a set of lungs. Show them to your child and explain that this is what his lungs look like – pink and healthy. Give your child a sponge and some black paint, and ask him to dab the paint over the paper lungs. Explain to him that this is what a smoker's lungs would look like as a result of tar, one of the substances found in cigarette smoke, being deposited on the lung tissue. Explore with your child on how he can have healthy lungs. Use this opportunity to discuss with your child what he can do to prevent his lungs from being damaged — for example, refrain from smoking, encourage family members who smoke to quit so that your child can breathe in fresh & clean air, exercise regularly.

Smells like smoke

Smokers tend to get more coughs and colds because of the toxins that they inhale. So they have stuffy noses and cannot smell or taste well. Lay out an array of snacks for your

child. Have your child taste one, and taste it again while holding his nose. Explain to him that this is why smokers cannot enjoy what they eat because smoking interferes with their sense of taste and smell.

Limited lungs

Give your child a skipping rope and a face mask. Help him put on the mask and skip 10 times. Have him remove the mask and skip another 10 times. Ask him to contrast the experience of skipping with and without a mask — it should have been easier for him to skip without a mask. Use this experience to explain how smoking affects stamina and how smokers may have difficulty breathing as a result of the toxins inhaled. Tell him that over time, smokers can develop diseases, such as chronic bronchitis, a lung infection that is caused by viruses that affect the air passages in the lungs, which can cause lung damage if left untreated.

What's your choice?

Download interesting anti-smoking advertisements and video clips from YouTube. View the advertisements or video clips together with your child and get him to rate and explain the anti-smoking advertisement or video clip that he likes most.