HARM TO KIDS FROM SECONDHAND SMOKE

Every day, more than 15 million kids are exposed to secondhand smoke at home, with millions also exposed to secondhand smoke in schools and other places, as well.\(^1\) That exposure increases the chances that the children will suffer from smoke-caused coughs and wheezing, bronchitis, asthma, pneumonia, potentially fatal lower respiratory tract infections, eye and ear problems, and other health problems. Each year, 280 children actually die from respiratory illness caused by secondhand smoke.\(^2\)

According to a 1997 study, exposure to secondhand smoke also leads to over 500,000 physician visits for asthma and 1.3 million visits for coughs, and to more than 115,000 episodes of pneumonia, 14,000 tonsillectomies or adenoidectomies, 260,000 episodes of bronchitis, two million childhood cases of otis media (an acute or chronic inflammation of the middle ear), and 5,200 tympanostomies (middle ear operations).\(^3\) Similarly, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that between 150,000 and 300,000 children under 1-1/2 years of age annually get bronchitis or pneumonia from breathing secondhand tobacco smoke, resulting in as many as 15,000 hospitalizations.\(^4\) According to EPA, “In children under 18 years of age, secondhand smoke exposure also results in more coughing and wheezing, a small but significant decrease in lung function, and an increase in fluid in the middle ear,” and exposure to second hand smoke worsens the condition of 200,000 to one million children each year while also serving as a risk factor for the onset of asthma in children with no prior symptoms.\(^5\)

Other harms to kids from smoking by others include death and injury from smoking caused fires, nicotine poisoning and other toxic effects from the ingestion of cigarettes and cigarette butts, and fungal infections or allergic reactions among those with weakened immune systems from exposure to fungal spores or mold in cigarette tobacco.\(^6\)

For more on secondhand smoke, see the Campaign website at http://tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/index.php?CategoryID=19

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\(^3\) DiFranza, J.R. & R.A. Lew (April 1997).

\(^4\) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Setting the Record Straight: Secondhand Smoke is A Preventable Health Risk, EPA-402-F-94-005 (June 1994), www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs.
