

## Infants and Second Hand Smoke

” What happens during early childhood lays the foundation for a lifetime.

Second hand smoke (SHS) has no safe level of exposure. Even when exposed to SHS for a short time there can be **harmful health effects**<sup>2–4</sup>.

Children are **more vulnerable** to harmful substances of tobacco smoke, as they have a higher breath rate and their lungs have not been fully developed<sup>1</sup>.

Infants and children exposed to SHS after birth are at **double risk of sudden infant death syndrome** (SIDS)<sup>3</sup>. SIDS is the unexpected and unexplained death of an infant in the first year of life and is the leading cause of death among healthy infants<sup>5</sup>. SIDS is more common among children who share the same bed with their parents if one of them or both smoke<sup>6</sup>. Higher concentrations of nicotine and cotinine (a biological marker for SHS exposure) have been found in infants who have died from SIDS<sup>2,3</sup>. The **infants' brain seems to be affected by chemicals in SHS**, with an impact on their breathing regulation<sup>2,4</sup>.

Infants' exposure to SHS increases the **risk for acute respiratory infections** (ev pneumonia, bronchitis, middle ear disease, severe and frequent asthma attacks, respiratory symptoms and slowed lung growth)<sup>2</sup>.

**Wheezing, coughing and shortness of breath** are more frequently observed among children who have been exposed to SHS. Ear infections and fluid in children's ears are more common when they are exposed to SHS<sup>3</sup>.

Exposure of children to SHS has been found to double the risk of **meningococcal** disease<sup>7</sup> and has been associated with **obesity, cardiovascular** risk factors and the **metabolic** syndrome<sup>8</sup>.

Children whose caregivers smoke **are almost 70%** more likely to try smoking by the age of 15<sup>9</sup>.



# Did you know?

More than 80% of the human brain is formed **in the first 3 years of life**<sup>1</sup>.

Studies suggest that **SHS from heated tobacco products expose** people around them to some of the same chemicals found in cigarette smoke, although at lower levels<sup>10</sup>. **The aerosol exhaled from e-cigarettes**<sup>7</sup> users can expose people around them to **harmful substances**<sup>11</sup>. Further studies are necessary in order to explore health effects of SHS from heated tobacco products and e-cigarettes, especially for children.



## How can I protect my baby from SHS?

**Quitting smoking** is one of the most significant things you can do for your child. Don't let anyone smoke in your home and car and **avoid smoky environments**. This includes e-cigarettes<sup>12</sup>.

Quitting might be challenging, but **support** is out there<sup>6</sup>.

**Smoke** from one cigarette **stays in a room for hours**, even if you open windows or use ventilation systems, air purifiers or fresheners, fans or air conditioners<sup>12</sup>.

Smoke from other rooms can spread around the house, through doorways, plumbing, etc.<sup>12</sup>

After smoking, the smoke will still be on your clothes, hands and hair<sup>6</sup>.



# Your baby is not the one who decides!

## Learn more:

<https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/quit-smoking/quit-smoking-medications/index.html>  
<https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/fact-sheet-smoking.pdf>

## References

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