

# Smoking and your family

## What is second-hand smoke?

Second-hand smoke is exhaled by a smoker and mixes with the smoke that comes from the end of a burning cigarette. Breathing in second-hand smoke means you are exposed to the same chemicals as the smoker, also called 'passive smoking'.

Children can also be affected by 'third-hand smoke'. This is the chemical residue cigarettes leave on surfaces and is present for a long time after smoke is present. It may be present on clothing items, household surfaces, toys or anything that has been close to cigarette smoke.

## What are the risks to children?

When children are exposed to second-hand smoke, they are at increased risk of:

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or 'cot death'
- Asthma, bronchiolitis, croup, and other respiratory problems
- Meningitis, ear infections and other infections
- Needing to be admitted to hospital more often than children living in smoke-free environments
- Children who grow up in homes with a smoker are more likely to become a smoker themselves.

## What are the risks to babies in pregnancy?

Smoking during pregnancy harms the developing baby. The smoke that mum breathes in enters her blood stream which crosses the placenta to affect the baby. The chemicals in cigarette smoke reduce the amount of oxygen and nutrients that reach the baby.

This results in increased risk of:

- Being born premature (too early)
- Being born at a low birth weight (which is associated with health problems)
- Miscarriage or stillbirth.

Quitting smoking before or during pregnancy reduces the risk of harm to your baby.

## How can I reduce the risk for my family?

There is no safe level of smoke exposure for your kids.



## Stopping smoking is the best way to reduce the risk to your child from second-hand smoke.

If now is not the right time for you to quit, you can reduce the risk for your kids by:

- Keep your car and home (and any other enclosed spaces) smoke free. Opening a window or having the fan on when you smoke does not reduce exposure to second-hand smoke.
- Only smoke outside, and not around children
- If you are smoking outside, wear a jacket you can take off or change your clothing before you see your kids
- If friends or family smoke, ask them not to smoke around your children.

## Quitting smoking

Quitting is challenging, but there are strategies that make it easier to quit:

- Contact the Quitline on 13 7848 for free support (also available in languages other than English) by trained quit counsellors who can help you develop a quit plan.
- Medications are available to help you quit and can reduce the cravings people can feel when they stop smoking. Your GP can help you decide which medication may be best for you.

## Related Links

- [Get support to quit](#)
- [Request a free Quit Kit](#)
- [Find out how much money you can save when you quit smoking](#)
- [Health benefits when you quit](#)
- [How you can help others quit](#)
- [Medications that can help you quit](#)
- [Passive smoking and your health](#)



Government of **Western Australia**  
Child and Adolescent Health Service

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

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