



CELEBRATE A SMOKE-FREE MOTHER'S DAY

Mother's Day is a day to celebrate moms for who they are and all of the wonderful things they do. It is also a great time for moms to remember the important role they play in influencing the choices their kids make regarding tobacco use. Unfortunately, tobacco use among women remains a serious problem: more than 20 million women currently smoke, an estimated 173,000 women die every year from smoking,¹ and more than 86,000 kids have already lost their mom to smoking.²

Moms who smoke can celebrate Mother's Day by quitting, and all moms, whether or not they smoke, can celebrate Mother's Day by taking a number of effective actions to protect their kids from becoming another one of the tobacco industry's addicted customers and victims. Even if they smoke, what moms say, how they act, and the values they communicate through their words and deeds have an enormous influence on whether or not their kids smoke.³ And all moms, smokers and nonsmokers alike, can also do a lot to protect their kids from secondhand smoke.

How Can Moms Keep Their Children From Smoking?

As a parent, you are one of the most important persons in a child's life, especially when it comes to cigarettes. You can make a big difference in the choices your kids make.

- If you smoke, quit. If you can't quit, keep trying. Children from families who smoke are twice as likely to become smokers themselves – but parents who try to quit and talk to their kids about how addictive smoking is, why they want to quit, and how important it is to never start, can beat those odds.*
- Maintain a totally smoke-free home (even if you smoke).
- Educate your child about the dangers of cigarette smoking.
 - Talk about addiction and how hard it is to quit smoking.
 - Emphasize the immediate health effects.
 - Emphasize the effects of smoking on physical appearance.
- Listen to what your child says and does about smoking and encourage your child when he/she makes good choices.
- Ask your child about his/her friends and their attitudes toward smoking. Discuss peer pressure and how to deal with it effectively.
- Clear up any misunderstandings your child might have about smoking. For example: everybody is not doing it, getting hooked can happen very quickly, and quitting is very difficult.
- Make sure your kids' schools have strong and well-enforced no-smoking rules for kids and staff.
- Support federal, state, and local tobacco-prevention efforts.⁴

How Can Moms Protect Their Children from Secondhand Smoke Harms?

An estimated 22 million children aged 3-11 years and 18 million youth aged 12-19 years, are exposed to secondhand smoke every year.⁵ Secondhand smoke contains more than 250 chemicals known to be toxic or carcinogenic (cancer-causing).⁶ Babies exposed to secondhand smoke face a higher risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and a range of other serious health and developmental problems, and exposed older children have increased rates of lower respiratory infections, ear infections, and asthma. Exposure to cigarette

* For helpful information on quitting, see <http://tobaccofreekids.org/research/webresources/quitting.shtml>.

smoke during childhood may lead to the development of cancer during adulthood. It can also prolong and worsen numerous medical conditions, including pneumonia, bronchitis, croup, laryngitis, bronchiolitis, asthma, flu, ear infections, colds, sinus infections, sore throats, and eye irritation, leading to increased school absenteeism, emergency room visits, and hospitalizations.⁷

How can you protect your child from secondhand smoke?

- If you smoke, quit smoking – or at least keep trying.* Call the local office of the American Lung Association or American Cancer Society, talk to your doctor, or sign up for a stop-smoking course.
- Don't let anyone smoke in your home. Make sure anyone who smokes only does so outside, away from open doors and windows. If you smoke, wear a "smoking shirt," and remove it before coming into contact with your child, especially infants – and never smoke while holding, feeding, or bathing your child. And remember: smoking residues in a home (or car) can cause harm even when smoking is no longer taking place.
- Never smoke in the car, especially when your child is a passenger.
- Avoid leaving your child with someone who smokes or in smoky environments. Ask about smoking and smoke-free rules and practices when evaluating daycare centers or babysitters, or even when leaving your kids at other people's homes. And try to make sure that your child does not take a job in a restaurant or other location that allows smoking.⁸
- Support strong federal, state, and local smoke-free laws.

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, May 4, 2009 / Meg Riordan

Related Campaign Factsheets

- Mother's Day Data on Moms Smoking & Related Harms, <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0257.pdf>
- How Parents Can Protect Kids From Becoming Addicted Smokers, <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0152.pdf>
- Tobacco Use and Kids, <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/index.php?CategoryID=3>
- Tobacco Use Harms, <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/index.php?CategoryID=13>
- Harm to Kids from Secondhand Smoke, <http://tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0104.pdf>

¹ U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), "Annual Smoking-Attributable Mortality, Years of Potential Life Lost, and Productivity Losses --- United States, 2000-2004," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* 57(45), November 14, 2008, <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm5745.pdf>

² Leistikow, B, et al., "Estimates of Smoking-Attributable Deaths at Ages 15-54, Motherless or Fatherless Youths, and Resulting Social Security Costs in the United States in 1994," *Preventive Medicine* 30(5): 353-360, May 2000.

³ Newman, I, et al., "The influence of parental attitude and behavior on early adolescent cigarette smoking," *Journal of School Health*, 59(4): 150-2, April 1989. See, also, Distefano, J, et al., "Parental influences predict adolescent smoking in the United States, 1989-1993," *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 22: 466-74, 1998.

⁴ For more detail and cites to sources, see TFK Factsheet, *How Parents Can Protect Kids From Becoming Addicted Smokers*, <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0152.pdf>.

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006. http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/sgr_2006/index.htm.

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006. http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/sgr_2006/index.htm.

⁷ TFK Factsheet, *Harm to Kids from Secondhand Smoke*: <http://tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0104.pdf>.

⁸ TFK Factsheet, *How Parents Can Protect Kids From Becoming Addicted Smokers*, <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0152.pdf>.

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