

Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS) and Children

*An issue for all child health professionals,
carers and parents*



Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS) and Children

Today we will run through:

- What is Environmental Tobacco Smoke
- How it affects young children
- Why it affects young children
- What you can do encourage parents or carers to smoke outside the car and home.



What Is Environmental Tobacco Smoke?

- Second-hand smoke is often referred to as *passive smoking*.
- ETS is made up of side stream smoke and mainstream smoke
- The greater the exposure to ETS, the worse the health outcomes are.



ETS and Childhood Health

- Childhood exposure to ETS is predominantly involuntary.
- Children are particularly sensitive to ETS.
- The issue affects an enormous number of children:

The National Drug Strategy reports that in 1998-99:

- 224 Australians died as a result of passive smoking
- 103 of these under 15 years of age



What are the reported impacts on child health?

The NH&MRC concluded that passive smoking is associated with:

- Increase in asthma
- 60% increase in risk of a child developing lower respiratory illnesses like croup, bronchitis, pneumonia
- Increased risk of SIDS
- Increased risk of otitis media (including glue ear)



What other effects have been reported?

It has been reported that ETS exposure *may* also lead to:

- Meningitis
- Learning difficulties
- Behavioural problems and language impairment
- Increased risk of cardiovascular disease
- Small increase in risk of developing childhood cancers



Narrowing in: Respiratory Effects of ETS in early life

- ETS exposure is a common cause of **LRTI** (a 1.7-fold higher risk of having LRTI in children of smoking mothers)
- Respiratory affects greatest in the first 2 years of life
- **Asthma** is more frequent, more severe in children of smokers
- Asthma-related **hospitalisations and life-threatening asthma attacks** more common in children whose parents smoke
- Children who live in a home with smokers have **impaired lung function**



Narrowing in: SIDS and ETS

- Maternal smoking causes a significant increase in the risk of SIDS
- Infants of mothers who smoke have almost 5 times the risk of dying from SIDS than infants whose mothers do not smoke
- Parental smoking, especially by the mother, may be responsible for up to one-half of all SIDS cases
- Smoking is the strongest modifiable risk factor for SIDS.



The Health System Burden of ETS exposure

- Smoking is a common but preventable source of infant and childhood morbidity
- Exposure increases respiratory diseases and middle ear infections which leads to more medical consultations, prescriptions drugs and hospitalisations
- Children of smokers have an increased risk of smoking themselves



Where does ETS exposure occur?

- Exposure to ETS in infants and toddlers occurs mainly in the family home
- Private cars are a further source of ETS exposure in children
- Breast-feeding mothers who smoke expose their infants to nicotine and smoke-related carcinogens through breast milk.



Awareness about health risks of exposure to ETS

However:

- There are still misconceptions about the ways to reduce children's exposure to ETS
- Many smoking parents continue to expose their children to ETS in the home
- Rates of smoking in pregnant women are unchanged.



Putting Intervention into Practice

- This message is promoting a behaviour change.
- Use less confrontational approaches to encourage ETS control
- Uncover the barriers to smoking outside the car and home



Achieving Smoke-free Cars and Homes

- Parents should be especially targeted around the time of childbirth
- Promote the fact that more and more smokers are making their homes smoke-free
- Offer practical suggestions
- Encourage smokers not to smoke in cars that are used by non smokers



Summary (I)

- Exposure to ETS is linked to many childhood illnesses including asthma, lower respiratory tract infections, middle ear infections and SIDS
- Strategies to reduce children's exposure to ETS should aim to:
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 - Make the Car and Home Smoke Free
 - Allocate designated smoking areas



Summary (II)

- Successful strategies aim to change attitudes and behaviour, not just knowledge
- Discuss and outline barriers with parents and trying to help them over come these.



Further information and resources:

Further information can be accessed at:

www.smokefreezone.org.au

Website contains:

- Information for health professionals, parents and carers
- Downloadable fact sheets and checklists
- Online resource ordering system
- Other language support (Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic)
- Indigenous health pages

