



How Does Secondhand Smoke Harm Children's Health?

Secondhand smoke (which is also called environmental tobacco smoke or ETS) is a complex mixture of many toxic substances. Among them: benzene, ammonia and arsenic. According to Health Canada, about 50 of these chemicals cause cancer.

Exposure to ETS causes a number of health problems in children (under 18), including:

- bronchitis and pneumonia (lower respiratory tract infections)
- middle ear disease
- upper respiratory tract irritation
- worsen asthma

ETS is also linked to:

- prompting of an asthma attack
- negative impact on learning process and behaviour
- decreased lung function
- worsen cystic fibrosis

A child who has at least one smoking parent increases its risk of developing lower respiratory tract illness by 1.3 to 1.7 fold.

In 2004, twelve percent of children 0-11 years of age were regularly exposed to second hand smoke in the home. This means that 456,879 children have a greater chance of being ill in Canada.

Quitting smoking has health benefits both for smokers and the children living with them.

Sources :

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