



## Tobacco Public Policy Center at Capital University Law School

303 E. BROAD ST. • COLUMBUS, OH • 43215-3200 • PHONE: (614) 236-7315 • FAX: (501) 636-3864  
EMAIL: TOBACCO@LAW.CAPITAL.EDU • WEB: TOBACCPOLICY.ORG

# Secondhand Smoke in the Home: Children as the “Captive Smoker”

Nearly half of the world’s children routinely breathe air polluted by tobacco smoke, including over 15 million children in the U.S. who are exposed to secondhand smoke in the home every day.<sup>1</sup> Numerous studies have proven that secondhand smoke can lead to countless illnesses, sometimes fatal, and its effects have been found to be especially damaging to growing children.<sup>2</sup> Unlike their adult counterparts, children have little choice over whether or not they can exit a smoke-filled environment. Parents, child care providers, medical professionals, law practitioners, family advocates, and the courts have a moral and ethical duty – and perhaps a legal duty as well – to be informed of the danger that parental smoking can pose to a child’s health.

## Secondhand Smoke is a Toxic Soup

- Secondhand smoke (or “environmental tobacco smoke”) is composed of the mainstream smoke exhaled by the smoker, as well as the more toxic sidestream smoke that is produced at the burning end of a cigarette, cigar or pipe.<sup>3</sup>
- Cigarette smoke contains more than 4,000 chemical compounds, more than 40 of which are known to cause cancer in humans or animals.<sup>4</sup>
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has found that secondhand smoke is a “known human carcinogen” and has classified it as a Group A carcinogen.<sup>5</sup> Like radon, asbestos and other Group A carcinogens, there is no safe level of exposure for this toxin.

## Smoke in the home/vehicle

- Living in a pack-a-day smoker’s home for 24 hours is comparable to smoking three cigarettes.<sup>6</sup>
- The primary source of secondhand smoke that children ingest in the home is sidestream smoke, which contains more than twice as much tar and nicotine as the smoke that is inhaled by the smoker.<sup>7</sup>
- Riding in the car with a smoker for one hour is comparable to smoking four cigarettes.<sup>8</sup>
- Smoking near a window or fan, or even outdoors, does not eliminate the harmful effects of secondhand smoke on children. In fact, one study showed that children whose parents *smoked only outdoors* still had a higher rate of ear infections and respiratory illnesses than children of non-smokers.<sup>9</sup>

## Harmful Effects of Secondhand Smoke on Children in the US

- Secondhand smoke causes over 1,000,000 *illnesses* and 280 *deaths* of children every year.<sup>10</sup>

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- Maternal smoking has been found to be the strongest risk factor leading to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).<sup>11</sup> Approximately 2,500 babies die of SIDS each year.<sup>12</sup>
- Studies show that secondhand smoke is a significant contributor to the following illnesses and diseases in children:
 

Asthma	Ear Infections	Pneumonia
Bronchitis	Hearing Loss	Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
Cavities	Low Birth Weight	Other Respiratory Illnesses <sup>13</sup>
- The EPA estimates that up to one million asthmatic children have their condition worsened due to secondhand smoke, and secondhand smoke has been linked to decreased lung function and potential for lung cancer later in life.<sup>14</sup>
- Children who are exposed to secondhand smoke have more school absences per year than children who are not exposed to passive smoke.<sup>15</sup>
- Over 21.9 million children are estimated to be at risk of reading deficits due to secondhand smoke exposure in the home.<sup>16</sup>
- It is estimated that children's secondhand smoke exposure results in \$4.6 billion in direct annual medical expenditures.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *In re Julie Anne*, 121 Ohio Misc. 2d 20, 40 (Ct. of Common Pleas, Lake County, Juvenile Division, 2002) (citing World Health Organization statistics).

<sup>2</sup> LAUREN ZEISE, *Health Effects of Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke*, SMOKING AND TOBACCO CONTROL MONOGRAPH NO. 10 (1999), [http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/tcrb/monographs/10/m10\\_complete.pdf](http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/tcrb/monographs/10/m10_complete.pdf); NAT'L CTR. FOR CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION AND HEALTH PROMOTION, 1986 SURGEON GENERAL REPORT: THE HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF SMOKING (1986), [http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/sgr/sgr\\_1986/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/sgr/sgr_1986/index.htm); NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, ENVIRONMENTAL TOBACCO SMOKE: MEASURING EXPOSURES AND ASSESSING HEALTH RISKS (1986), <http://www.nap.edu/books/0309037301/html/272.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Indoor Environmental Asthma Triggers – Secondhand Smoke, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/asthma/shs.html> (last visited June 9, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> CAMPAIGN FOR TOBACCO-FREE KIDS, HEALTH HARMS FROM SECONDHAND SMOKE (2004), <http://tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0103.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. EPA, SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT – SECONDHAND SMOKE IS A PREVENTABLE HEALTH RISK (1994) <http://www.epa.gov/smokefree/pubs/strsfs.html>.

<sup>6</sup> TOBACCO-FREE OHIO, THE ACCIDENTAL SMOKER (2004), <http://www.tobaccofreeohio.org/contentfiles/ACFDD45.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Carlos Clark, *An Argument for Considering Parental Smoking in Child Abuse and Neglect Proceedings*, 19 J. CONTEMP. HEALTH L. & POL'Y 225, 239-241 (2002) (discussing ETS in the home).

<sup>8</sup> TOBACCO-FREE OHIO, *supra* note 6.

<sup>9</sup> AnnaKarin Johannsson, Goren Hermansson & Johnny Ludvigsson, *How Should Parents Protect Their Children from Environmental Tobacco-Smoke Exposure in the Home?*, PEDIATRICS 291-5 (April 2004), available at <http://www.pediatrics.aapublications.org>.

<sup>10</sup> *Supra* note 4; CAMPAIGN FOR TOBACCO-FREE KIDS, HARM TO KIDS FROM SECONDHAND SMOKE (2000), <http://tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0104.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Alistair Woodward & Murray Laugesen, *How Many Deaths are Caused by Second Hand Cigarette Smoke?*, TOBACCO CONTROL 383-388 (December 2001), available at <http://tc.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/10/4/383>.

<sup>12</sup> American Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Institute, <http://www.sids.org> (last visited June 9, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> TOBACCO-FREE OHIO, SECONDHAND SMOKE IS DANGEROUS TO CHILDREN (2005), <http://www.tobaccofreeohio.org/contentfiles/SFOchild.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. EPA, FACT SHEET: RESPIRATORY HEALTH EFFECTS OF PASSIVE SMOKING (1993), <http://www.epa.gov/smokefree/pubs/etsfs.html>; C. Svanes., E. Omenaas, D. Jarvis, S. Chinn, A. Gulsvik & P. Burney, *Parental Smoking in Childhood and Adult Obstructive Lung Disease: Results from the European Community Respiratory Health Survey*, THORAX 295-302 (April 2005), available at <http://thorax.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/59/4/295>.

<sup>15</sup> Karen M. Emmons, S. Katherine Hammond, Joseph L. Flava, Wayne F. Velicer, Janet L. Evans & Alicia D. Monroe, *A Randomized Trial to Reduce Passive Smoke Exposure in Low-Income Households With Young Children*, PEDIATRICS 18-24 (July 2001), available at <http://www.pediatrics.aapublications.org>.

<sup>16</sup> Kimberly Yolton, Kim Dietrich, Peggy Auinger, Bruce P. Lanphear & Richard Hornung, *Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke and Cognitive Abilities of U.S. Children and Adolescents*, ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVES 98-103 (Jan. 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Emmons et al., *supra* note 15.