



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

P is for protecting babies and children from secondhand smoke



Help those who depend
on you the most

Tips for smokers living
with children



About half of the children in the UK live in a home where someone smokes. Most of the smoke from a cigarette goes into the air. Children growing up in smoky environments are breathing secondhand smoke.

“What’s wrong with secondhand smoke?”

Tobacco smoke contains poisonous gases, tar and thousands of toxic chemicals. These poisons get into the bodies of children who live in smoky atmospheres. Children are more sensitive to smoke than adults as their bodies are young and still developing.

“How does secondhand smoke harm children?”

Babies and children exposed to a smoky atmosphere are:

- twice as likely to have asthma attacks and chest infections;
- more likely to need hospital care in their first year of life;
- off sick from school more often;
- get more coughs, colds and wheezes.

Medical research also shows they have:

- much higher risk of cot death than the children of non-smokers;
- increased risk of meningitis;
- more chance of partial deafness.



“What can you do to protect babies and children?”

You can help protect them by making the home smoke-free. If that's not possible then keep their playing, sleeping and eating areas completely smoke-free.

“What if that's not always possible?”

Always try to smoke away from children. If getting outside is difficult, smoke near an open window or an extractor fan, but don't forget to safeguard unattended windows and doors.

Tips

- Smoke outside whenever possible.
- If inside, keep smoke limited to one place, well away from children.
- Always keep smoky rooms well ventilated.

“What can I do if my family and friends are smokers?”

Let them know before they visit that you are keeping your home smoke-free for your children's health. Ask if they would help by smoking outside or before they visit. Explain that children get ill if they breathe secondhand smoke.



“What about car journeys?”

Secondhand smoke gets even more concentrated inside a car. You can reduce children’s travel sickness and make a positive difference to their health if you avoid smoking when they travel with you.

Tips

- On short trips, smoke before you set off, rather than in the car.
- On longer trips, stop and smoke outside away from the children.



“What other dangers do children face from smoking?”

As well as the harm caused by secondhand smoke, cigarettes are responsible for many accidents and injuries. Cigarettes not put out properly are also a major cause of house fires.

Tips to avoid accidents

- Teach children that cigarette ends are hot and will burn them if touched.
- Make sure smokers put out their cigarettes before going near children.

Tips to reduce the risk of children starting a fire:

- Keep all smoking materials out of children's reach;
- Never leave a lit cigarette, lighters or matches unattended;
- Clear away ashtrays to prevent children playing with cigarette ends.

“How can I discourage my children from wanting to smoke?”

Research shows that children who live with smokers are much more likely to start themselves. Smoking is a difficult habit to break, so it is important to encourage children never to start.

Tips

- Tell children from your experience what you don't like about smoking and why you don't want them to start.
- If you or other family members regret starting, explain why to the children.



“What else can I do?”

If possible stop smoking as soon as the pregnancy is confirmed.

Women who smoke or are exposed to secondhand smoke during their pregnancy are at risk of complications.

The best thing you can do to protect your children is to keep them away from all cigarettes and smoky places. The ideal thing would be for all smokers to try to stop.



Help to give up smoking

For anyone considering stopping there is plenty of help and support available. **Call Smokers' Helpline Wales on 0800 169 0 169.** This is a free and friendly service that offers help and support. Callers can receive an information pack, details on how to stop smoking and on the different treatments available.

 **Smokers' Helpline Wales: 0800 169 0 169**

 **All Wales Smoking Cessation Service:
0800 085 2219**

Your doctor, practice nurse, health visitor or pharmacist can also provide advice on stopping smoking. Ask them about the treatments available on prescription.

You can also contact your local stop smoking service on 0800 085 2219 for free and friendly advice and support to help you quit.

Smokers' Helpline Wales

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All Wales Smoking Cessation Service

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