
Asthma, children and smoking

Summary

- Cigarette smoke can trigger asthma in children.
 - Exposure to smoke may cause more frequent and more severe asthma attacks in children with asthma.
 - Avoid smoking in the car and ask your passengers to do the same.
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Cigarette smoke can trigger asthma symptoms or an asthma attack in some people. Children are particularly sensitive to tobacco smoke as their lungs are smaller and more delicate, and are still developing. Children who live with people who smoke have higher rates of asthma than children living with people who do not smoke, and their asthma is triggered more often.

Effects of second-hand smoke on asthma in children

Smoke, including tobacco smoke, is a common trigger for asthma. Exposure to tobacco smoke can increase the risk of an asthma flare-up, reduce the likelihood of achieving good asthma control and reduce the effectiveness of preventer medications.

Smoking in pregnancy

Smoking during pregnancy can severely affect the developing baby. It increases the risk of childhood wheeze and adversely affects lung function of the child. It can also increase the risk of other health conditions including:

- sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI) – previously known as ‘sudden infant death syndrome’ (SIDS) or ‘cot death’
- miscarriage
- stillbirth
- complications during birth
- having a low-weight baby who is more vulnerable to infection and health problems in adulthood
- preterm delivery (birth at less than 37 weeks)
- the baby being born with weaker lungs, which may persist into adulthood
- the baby having a weaker immune system.

Smoking by the father can also severely affect the unborn baby and may result in lower birth weight of the baby and a higher risk of the baby dying soon after birth.

Tobacco laws in Victoria

In Victoria, it is illegal to smoke in cars carrying children less than 18 years of age. Smoking in the family car increases exposure of both adults and children to second-hand smoke in an enclosed space. This is unhealthy and can trigger an attack in children who have asthma.

It is also illegal to smoke:

- within the grounds of, and at and within four metres of entrances to, all Victorian childcare centres, kindergartens (or preschools) and primary and secondary schools
 - at and within four metres of entrances to children’s indoor play centres, public hospitals, registered community health centres and certain Victorian Government buildings
 - at all of Victoria’s patrolled beaches within 50 metres of a red and yellow flag
 - within ten metres of children’s playground equipment
 - within ten metres of skate parks
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- within the outdoor areas of all public swimming pool complexes
- within ten metres of outdoor sporting venues during under-18s events
- in all areas of train stations, covered bus shelters and raised platform tram stops
- in outdoor dining areas of restaurants, cafes, take-away shops and licensed premises
- at enclosed restaurants, cafes and dining areas of hotels
- at licensed clubs
- at shopping centres
- in enclosed workplaces
- at under-age music or dance events
- in courts or police stations.

Visit Better Health Channel's page on [Victoria's tobacco laws](#) for more information.

Quit smoking for your children

Quitting smoking can be challenging, and you may try more than once before you succeed. But quitting smoking is one of the best things you will ever do for your health and wellbeing, and your children's. Talk to your doctor or **pharmacist** for advice on how to start, and the tools available to you. You might find nicotine patches, inhalers or gum to be helpful.

Better Health Channel has [tips on how to quit](#), and [Quit Victoria](#) offers telephone support via the Quitline, as well as the [QuitCoach](#) and [QuitTxt](#) services.

Parents and carers are role models for their children. Once you quit smoking, you will set a great example to the children around you and reduce the chance that they will take up smoking later in life. You will also reduce your and your children's risk of developing **asthma** or worsening asthma symptoms.

Where to get help

- Your **GP (doctor)**
- **Pharmacist**
- The [Royal Children's Hospital](#) has produced a number of videos to help you better understand and manage your child's asthma.
- **Quitline** Tel. 13 QUIT (**13 7848**)
- **Asthma Australia** Tel. **1800 278 462** or **(03) 9326 7088**

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

Asthma Australia

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