

# asthma and smoking



**Cigarette smoke contains 4000 harmful chemicals. It is a major trigger for asthma.** Tobacco smoke irritates the airways in the lungs, causing the cells to produce lots of mucus (phlegm). The normal cleaning action of the lungs is also affected so that the mucus and other irritants are not removed. This means that smokers and those exposed to cigarette smoke are more prone to chest and throat infections. This may trigger or worsen asthma symptoms.

## **If you have asthma, smoking will:**

- Make your asthma worse
- May increase the frequency of your asthma attacks
- Make asthma control more difficult
- Increase the chances of permanently damaging your airways
- Make asthma medication less effective

## **What is passive smoking?**

Passive smoking occurs when you breathe in other people's cigarette smoke. Smoke from the burning end of a cigarette (sidestream smoke), is more harmful than smoke inhaled by the smoker because it contains higher levels of some chemicals.

## **If you have asthma, passive smoking can:**

- Trigger an asthma attack
- Increase the frequency of asthma attacks
- Increase the need for asthma medications
- Reduce lung function
- Increase sensitivity to other triggers in the environment like pets, pollens and chemicals.
- Make asthma preventer medication less effective
- Increase the rate of allergy in children who are exposed to passive smoking

## **Smoking during pregnancy may affect unborn babies by:**

- Reducing lung growth and function in the unborn baby's lungs
- Increasing the likelihood of a lower birth-weight baby
- Increasing the chance of the newborn baby developing asthma
- Increasing the risk of the baby dying of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)

## **Smoking around babies and children can:**

- Impair their lung function
- Increase their chances of getting asthma
- Increase the frequency of their asthma attacks
- Increase the severity of their asthma symptoms
- Increase their chances of developing respiratory infections

## **How can I reduce my exposure to cigarette smoke?**

- If you smoke, ring the Quitline on 131 848 or ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice on quitting
- Make your home and car smoke free
- Avoid smoky environments
- Don't let anyone smoke around you or your children
- If possible, avoid working in smoky environments

## **Other control measures:**

- Keep your asthma under control by using preventer medications as prescribed
- Follow your asthma management plan
- Carry your reliever medication at all times and use when necessary
- Learn the 4 Step Asthma Emergency Plan

## 4 STEP ASTHMA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN



1. Sit the person upright and give reassurance.
2. Without delay, give 4 separate puffs of a reliever (*Airomir, Asmol, Bricanyl, Epaq or Ventolin*).  
The medication is best given one puff at a time via a spacer device\*.  
Ask the person to take 4 breaths from the spacer after each puff of medication.
3. Wait 4 minutes. If there is little or no improvement, repeat steps 2 and 3.
4. If there is still no improvement, call an ambulance immediately - **DIAL 000**.

Continuously repeat steps 2 and 3 while waiting for the ambulance.

(\*Just use the puffer on its own if you don't have a spacer.)

For more information contact the Breathe Better Health Line 1800 645 130, go to [www.asthmasa.org.au](http://www.asthmasa.org.au) or visit the Breathe Better Centre at 300 South Road Hilton.