



**The Asthma Foundation of Queensland**

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## **Asthma & Smoking**

### **People with asthma and their carers should not smoke.**

Cigarette smoke, with its 4000 harmful chemicals, is a major asthma trigger. 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.

### **What happens if I have asthma and I smoke?**

Smoking:

- makes your asthma worse
- may increase the frequency of asthma attacks
- makes asthma control more difficult
- increases the chances of permanently damaging the airways
- makes asthma medication less effective

### **What is passive smoking?**

Passive smoking is breathing in other people's cigarette smoke. Smoke from the burning end of a cigarette (sidestream smoke) contains higher levels of some chemicals than the smoke inhaled by the smoker and is therefore more harmful.

### **How can passive smoking affect me if I have asthma?**

It 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

### **How can smoking during pregnancy affect unborn babies?**

It can:

- cause reduced lung growth and function in the unborn baby's lungs
- increase the likelihood of a lower birth-weight baby
- increase the chance of the newborn baby developing asthma
- increase 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



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## **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
- Work in a smoke free environment

## **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
- Be aware of the 4 Step Asthma First Aid Plan:

## **4 STEP ASTHMA FIRST AID 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.
4. If there is little or no improvement repeat steps 2 and 3.  
If there is still little or no improvement call an ambulance immediately (DIAL 000).  
Continue to 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 Asthma Foundation of Queensland on 1800 645 130.

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