

Secondhand smoke causes longer hospitalization in infants with respiratory infections

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More evidence has surfaced that supports the war on smoking, especially if smokers have an infant in their household. A study published today in the June issue of *Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology*, the scientific journal of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI), found that infants with a family history of allergic disease with lower respiratory tract infections, who are exposed to secondhand smoke are at risk for longer hospital stays.

An estimated 20 to 30 percent of otherwise healthy [infants](#) develop lower respiratory infections, such as bronchiolitis, annually. Of these, three percent are hospitalized.

"Respiratory infections in infants are common, but if the infant has a [family history](#) of respiratory issues such as asthma, they are at higher risk for infection and hospitalization," said allergist Meghan Lemke, MD, ACAAI member and lead study author. "Our research found that infants with a family history of allergic disease who are also exposed to secondhand smoke had a 23 percent longer hospital stay than those without secondhand smoke exposure."

Researchers examined 451 mothers and infants enrolled in a study focusing on childhood asthma and atopic disease outcomes associated with viral respiratory infections. In this group, 57 percent of infants were exposed to secondhand smoke. While 36 percent had a mother with atopic disease and an allergy, and 68 percent had an immediate relative with an allergic disease.

"Infants that are hospitalized for bronchiolitis have up to a 30 percent chance of developing persistent wheezing or asthma within the first decade of life," said allergist James Sublett, MD, chair of the ACAAI Indoor Environment Committee.

"Secondhand smoke is extremely harmful to children with asthma and other respiratory illnesses, and has been shown to contribute to uncontrolled asthma."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), secondhand smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals, hundreds of which are toxic and 70 that can cause cancer.

"[Secondhand smoke](#) can trigger asthma attacks in small children, which can be life-threatening," said Dr. Sublett. "It is critical that parents and other family members never smoke around children, young or old, especially inside of the home and car where smoke can linger."

Seven million American children have [asthma](#), a disease that is a leading cause of missed school days and 456,000 hospitalizations in the United States annually. Asthmatics under the care of a board-certified allergist have a 60 to 89 percent reduction in hospitalizations.

Provided by American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

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