

# Tobacco and Asthma

Asthma is a chronic disease of the lungs. People with asthma have airways that overreact to environmental “triggers” like pollen, mold, colds, and irritants like cigarette smoke and pollution. During an asthma attack/episode, the lungs are filled with mucus, the lining of the airways swell and the muscles around the airways tighten, leading to wheezing, coughing and difficulty breathing.<sup>1</sup>

In 2005, it was estimated that 22.2 million Americans currently have asthma.<sup>2</sup> Asthma is the most common chronic illness in children, affecting approximately 8.9% of children aged 17 and younger.<sup>2</sup> About 9% of Utahns suffer with asthma.<sup>3</sup>

## Impact of Tobacco on Asthma

- Tobacco smoke triggers asthma attacks in nearly 80% of people with asthma.<sup>4</sup>
- Smoking or exposure to cigarette smoke can increase asthma symptoms.
- Exposure to tobacco smoke in the workplace increases risk of developing asthma.<sup>5</sup>
- One hour of exposure to cigarette smoke causes 20% deterioration in short-term lung function.<sup>6</sup>

## Smokers vs. Nonsmokers

- Smokers have more severe asthma attacks.
- The asthma death rate among smokers is more than double that of nonsmokers.<sup>7</sup>

## Effects on Children

- Children whose mothers smoke during pregnancy have a higher risk of developing asthma.<sup>8</sup>
- Smoking more than 10 cigarettes a day while pregnant is associated with higher rates of asthma.<sup>4</sup>
- An estimated 400,000 to 1 million children with asthma will experience a worsening of their condition when exposed to secondhand smoke.<sup>3</sup>

1 Utah Asthma Program. “What is Asthma?” Utah Department of Health. 2 October 2007. <<http://www.health.utah.gov/asthma/whatisasthma.html>>

2 Akinbami, Lara. Asthma Prevalence, Health Care Use and Mortality: United States, 2003-05. National Center for Health Statistics. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/hestats/asthma03-05/asthma03-05.htm#fig1>

3 Lee, P., Tanner, R. Utah Asthma Program, Bureau of Health Promotion, Utah Department of Health, Asthma in Utah Burden Report, 2007.

4 The Impact of Asthma Survey, (1996). The National Asthma Campaign and Allen and Hanburys Ltd.

5 Jaakkola, M. S., et al. (2001, September) Environmental tobacco smoke and adult-onset asthma: a population-based incident case-control study. Paper presented at a meeting of the European Respiratory Society in Berlin.

6 Dahms, T. E., Bohlin, J. F., & Salvin, R. G., Passive smoking effects on bronchial asthma, 1981;80. [In No Smoke Without Asthma? National Asthma Campaign, February 1998]

7 Doll, R., Peto, R., Wheatley, K., Gray, R., & Sutherland, I. (1994) Papers: mortality in relation to smoking: 40 years' observations on male British doctors. British Medical Journal, 309, 901-911.

8 UniSci. “Smoking In Pregnancy Causes Many Child Asthma Cases.” 15 February 2001. Daily University Science News. 28 August 2007.

<<http://www.unisci.com/stories/20011/0215014.htm>>



Utah Asthma Program  
801-538-6141  
[www.health.utah.gov/asthma](http://www.health.utah.gov/asthma)



Utah Tobacco Prevention and  
Control Program  
1-877-220-3466  
[www.tobaccofreeutah.org](http://www.tobaccofreeutah.org)

# Secondhand Smoke and Asthma

**It's not easy to say no to secondhand smoke. You may feel hesitant or embarrassed to ask someone to stop smoking. But remember, their smoke affects your health and comfort. You have a right to say no.**

## Saying No to Friends and Family

- If you live with a smoker, ask him or her to smoke outside. Explain that you are concerned about the health risks and explain how smoke affects your asthma.
- Ask smokers who visit not to smoke in your home.
- Don't allow smoking in your car. It's your right to keep your home and car free of secondhand smoke.

## Saying No When You Visit Others' Homes

- Tell friends and relatives politely that you would appreciate it if they would not smoke while you are there.
- Let people know when their smoke is causing immediate problems (making your asthma or allergies worse, making your cough, making your eyes sting). Some people will stop smoking when they see the discomfort it causes.

## Special Risks for Children

- Exposure to secondhand smoke can cause asthma, bronchitis, and pneumonia.
- Children with colds, flu, asthma or other illnesses can be made more ill by the smoke.
- Children can be burned by falling ashes or lighted cigarettes.
- Secondhand smoke is also linked to miscarriages, low birthweight and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

## Free, statewide services to help tobacco users quit include:

### **Utah Tobacco Quit Line - 1.888.567.TRUTH (8788)**

The Utah Tobacco Quit Line is a free, telephone-based service designed to help people quit tobacco. Be connected with a specially trained Quit Coach who will help you develop a personalized quit plan and guide you through the quitting process.

### **Utah QuitNet: - [utahquitnet.com](http://utahquitnet.com)**

Utah QuitNet is a free, internet-based service designed to help individual tobacco users through the quitting process. As a member you'll have access to the world's largest online community of smokers and ex-smokers helping each other to quit and stay quit.



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