

Secondhand smoke raises odds of fertility problems in women

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If you need another reason to quit smoking, consider that it may diminish your chances of being a parent or grandparent. Scientists at the University of Rochester Medical Center have found that women exposed to second hand smoke, either as adults or children, were significantly more likely to face fertility problems and suffer miscarriages.

An epidemiologic analysis of more than 4,800 non-smoking women showed those who were exposed to second hand smoke six or more hours per day as children and adults faced a 68 percent greater chance of having difficulty getting pregnant and suffering one or more miscarriages. The study is published online in *Tobacco Control* and is one of the first publications to demonstrate the lasting effects of second hand smoke exposure on women during childbearing years.

"These statistics are breathtaking and certainly points to yet another danger of second hand smoke exposure," said Luke J. Peppone, Ph.D., research assistant professor at Rochester's James P. Wilmot Cancer Center.

In the study, four out of five women reported exposure to second hand smoke during their lifetime. Half of the women grew up in a home with smoking parents and nearly two-thirds of them were exposed to some second hand smoking at the time of the survey.

More than 40 percent of these women had difficulty getting pregnant (infertility lasting more than a year) or suffered miscarriages, some

repeatedly.

"We all know that cigarettes and second hand smoke are dangerous. Breathing the smoke has lasting effects, especially for women when they're ready for children," said Peppone, who analyzed information in the Patient Epidemiology Data System, a well-studied cohort that has yielded information on a variety of cancers.

Peppone analyzed surveys collected from 4,804 women who visited Roswell Park Cancer Institute for health screenings or cancer care from 1982-1998. The 16-page survey focused on lifestyle, habits, family and personal health history, and occupational and environmental exposures. Each participant in this study reported that they had never smoked, and had been pregnant at least once or tried to become pregnant.

Participants reported whether one or both of their parents smoked and if they lived with or worked with smokers as adults. They also estimated the amount of time they were exposed to second hand smoke.

Peppone acknowledges that the data is based upon self-reporting and that is not perfect. However, he said "Women, especially mothers, have extremely accurate recall. Mothers can easily recall details like how long they breastfed, what vitamins they took during prenatal care, and childhood activities."

Many of the women in the study grew up in the 1940s and 1950s, long before the surgeon general issued the first warning about the dangers of cigarette smoking in 1964. Since then, millions of dollars were spent to study the dangers of cigarette smoking. Tobacco use contributes to more than nearly 90 percent of all deadly lung cancers and 30 percent of all cancer deaths in the U.S., and a host of other health problems

Since the mid-1960s, smoking bans and government-funded, anti-

smoking campaigns have encouraged smokers to quit and discouraged others from starting using a number of passive and aggressive techniques. Smoking rates have declined, however people continue to use tobacco and suffer the health risks.

Source: University of Rochester Medical Center

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