

Passive smoking doubles risk of invasive meningococcal disease in children, study finds

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(Medical Xpress)—University of Nottingham researchers have been involved in a new study showing that exposure to second-hand smoke, as well as a mother's smoking while pregnant, significantly increases the risk of invasive meningococcal disease in children.

Researchers Dr Rachael Murray and Dr Jo Leonardi-Bee from the UK Centre for [Tobacco Control](#) Studies at the University reviewed the results from 18 previous studies to examine the link between passive smoking and the risk of invasive meningococcal disease in children.

Several of the studies reviewed suggest that exposure to [second-hand smoke](#) may be involved in meningococcal disease. The results showed that being exposed to second-hand smoke doubled the risk of invasive

meningococcal disease. For children under five this risk was even higher, and for children born to mothers who smoked during pregnancy the risk increased to three times higher.

Dr Murray explained: "We estimate that an extra 630 cases of childhood invasive meningococcal disease every year are directly attributable to second hand smoke in the UK alone.

"While we cannot be sure exactly how [tobacco smoke](#) is affecting these children, the findings from this study highlight consistent evidence of the further harms of smoking around children and during pregnancy, and thus parents and family members should be encouraged to not smoke in the home or around children."

Invasive meningococcal disease is a major cause of [bacterial meningitis](#) and can also cause severe illness when bacteria invade the blood, lungs or joints. Meningococcal disease is particularly prevalent in children and young adults, and nearly 1 in 20 affected individuals will die despite medical attention. One in 6 will be left with a severe disability, including neurological and [behavioural disorders](#).

This study, "Second hand [smoke exposure](#) and the risk of invasive meningococcal disease in children: systematic review and meta-analysis" by Dr Rachael Murray, Professor John Britton and Dr Jo Leonardi-Bee has been published in BioMed Central's open access journal *BMC Public Health*.

Provided by University of Nottingham

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