

Many kids with asthma live with secondhand smoke, CDC says

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These children have worse symptoms and more outbreaks, experts warn.

(HealthDay)—Children with asthma who are exposed to secondhand smoke have more severe symptoms and more frequent outbreaks than other kids with asthma.

Yet despite these [health hazards](#), the rate of [asthmatic children](#) who regularly breathe in [secondhand smoke](#) hasn't changed since 1999, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

From 1999 to 2010, the percentage of children without asthma exposed to environmental tobacco smoke decreased from about 57 percent to 44 percent, according to the research team lead by Dr. Kenneth Quinto at the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics.

Exposure of children with asthma showed no change, however, with nearly 58 percent exposed to environmental tobacco smoke from 1999 to 2002 and 54 percent exposed from 2007 to 2010, which isn't a significant difference, Quinto said.

"The message isn't getting through to parents who smoke," Quinto said, adding that more needs to be done to ensure that parents of children with asthma are not exposing them to secondhand smoke.

Not only is secondhand smoke bad for children with asthma, but exposure to secondhand smoke can lead to developing asthma, Quinto added.

The CDC researchers used data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey spanning from 1999 to 2010 to come to their conclusions.

From 2007 to 2010, more girls with asthma (nearly 58 percent) were exposed to secondhand smoke than girls without asthma (44 percent), the study also found. However, there was no significant difference among boys.

During this period, Mexican-American children, kids aged 6 to 11 and poor kids with asthma were all more likely to be living with secondhand smoke, the researchers found.

One expert said the new findings weren't very surprising.

"Children with asthma are often in environments with secondhand smoke," said Dr. Len Horovitz, a pulmonary specialist at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City. "We also know that secondhand smoke leads to [asthma](#) in childhood."

The answer, Horovitz said, is for parents to stop smoking. "Smoking is the cause of these problems—cessation can reduce them," he said.

One antismoking advocate called for more sweeping solutions.

"These results underscore the need for every state and community to enact comprehensive smoke-free laws that include all workplaces and public places," said Vince Willmore, vice president for communications at the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. He said that to date, 30 states and Washington, D.C., have passed laws requiring smoke-free restaurants and bars.

"For parents who smoke, the best step to protect children is to quit smoking," Willmore said. "Parents should also ensure that homes, cars and other places frequented by children are smoke-free."

More information: To find out more about secondhand smoke and asthma, visit the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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