

Smoking legislation prevents over 11,000 child hospital admissions in England each year

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The introduction of smoke-free legislation in England was associated with over 11,000 fewer admissions to hospital a year from respiratory infections in children, according to a new study.

The research, published online today (29 May 2015) in the *European Respiratory Journal*, is one of the most comprehensive investigations into the impact of smoke-free legislation on [child health](#).

Researchers used the Hospital Episode Statistics database to analyse 1,651,675 hospital admissions in [children](#) across England from 2001-2012. The children analysed were aged between 0 and 14 years to minimise the effect of those who actively smoked.

The results found that the introduction of legislation was followed by an immediate reduction of 13.8% in admission to hospital for lower respiratory tract infections. Admissions for upper respiratory tract infections also decreased, but at a more gradual rate. The findings also highlighted that the reduction in hospital admissions varied according to socio-economic status with the decrease being largest among the most deprived children.

Lead author Dr Jasper Been, from The University of Edinburgh in the UK, commented: "Our results add to the growing body of evidence demonstrating the benefits of smoke-free legislation. Although our

results cannot definitively establish a cause and effect, the rigorous analysis clearly shows that the introduction of smoke-free legislation was associated with significant reductions in [hospital admissions](#) among children.

Senior author Professor Aziz Sheikh from The University of Edinburgh added: "When you look at the results of this study alongside national data showing a decrease in smoking within the home, the findings greatly strengthen the recommendations for the global implementation of legislation prohibiting smoking in public places. We urge other nations to consider introducing and enforcing smoke-free legislation in order to protect the health of children - the most vulnerable members of society."

Dr Carlos Jimenez-Ruiz, Chair of the ERS Tobacco Control Committee, said: "We know that more than 600,000 non-smokers die from exposure to passive smoke each year. The findings of this new study add more weight to the argument that smoke-free legislation is a valuable tool in reducing the health harms of smoking, particularly in children. We must use this evidence to increase awareness and knowledge among policymakers of the harm caused by tobacco and the value of [legislation](#) designed to reduce this harm."

More information: Smoke-free legislation and childhood hospitalisations for respiratory tract infections, Jasper V. Been; Christopher Millett; John Tayu Lee; Constant P. van Schayck; Aziz Sheikh, [DOI: 10.1183/09031936.00014615](https://doi.org/10.1183/09031936.00014615)

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