

Tobacco: Smoking gun for kids' asthma attacks

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Exposure to smokers is still a major cause of asthma attacks in kids, according to results of a poll released today by the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health. In Aug. and Sept. 2010, the poll asked 1,621 parents across the United States whose children have asthma about factors that cause asthma attacks, and if their children spend time with tobacco smokers.

Among parents whose [children](#) have asthma, 73 percent state that tobacco smoke causes asthma attacks in their children. Yet, among families with asthmatic kids, nearly half (44 percent) of parents say their asthmatic child spends time with people who smoke. Typically, the smoker is the asthmatic child's parent (74 percent of the time). Less often (26 percent), the smoker is not the parent but is another adult,

sibling, or the asthmatic child's friend.

“Asthma is the most common chronic illness of children,” says Toby Lewis, M.D., M.P.H. assistant professor of pediatric pulmonology at C.S. Mott Children's Hospital. “Fortunately, there are many things that families can do to help their kids with asthma, such as seeing their doctor regularly, getting flu vaccinations, and limiting exposure to things that can trigger asthma attacks, such as pollen, dust and smoke.”

Research has shown that asthma is a leading chronic health condition among children and frequently causes visits to emergency departments, hospitalizations and missed school days. The number of children with asthma has tripled over the past several decades. About 18 percent of adults smoke in the U.S. overall; in some states, over 25 percent of adults smoke.

Other important factors for triggering kids' asthma attacks, according to the poll, include:

- Getting sick with the cold or flu - 88 percent
- Exposure to outdoor allergens such as pollen and weeds - 81 percent
- Outdoor air quality/pollution levels – 77 percent
- Exposure to indoor allergens such as dust mites and cockroaches – 71 percent
- Contact with furry or hairy animals – 48 percent
- Food – 30 percent

“Individual determination, support from health care providers and payment for quit strategies from insurers can help adults stop smoking and reduce children's asthma attacks,” says Matthew Davis, M.D., director of the poll and also associate professor of pediatrics and internal medicine in the Child Health Evaluation and Research Unit at the U-M Medical School and associate professor of public policy at the Gerald R.

Ford School of Public Policy. “Just imagine how many fewer asthma attacks might occur if smoking were reduced from 18 percent to 10 percent, or even 5 percent of adults?”

Recent research suggests that restricting smoking in public places may prevent children’s asthma attacks. Health care providers and public health officials have the opportunity to make a difference in children’s asthma, by paying attention to parents’ insights about smoking as a frequent cause of children’s [asthma](#) attacks.

Provided by University of Michigan

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