

# Exposure to tobacco smoke in the home increases childhood illnesses, health care demand

30 April 2016

Children who live with smokers end up in the doctor's office or hospital more often than those not exposed to tobacco smoke, according to new research being presented at the Pediatric Academic Societies 2016 Meeting.

For the research abstract, "Tobacco Smoke Exposure and Health Care Utilization among Children Nationwide," researchers analyzed 2011-2012 data from the National Survey on Children's Health, which is conducted by the U.S. Centers for Disease and Control Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics. They looked at patterns of [health](#) care utilization among children ranging in age from newborn to 17 who were living with smokers compared with those who not exposed to [tobacco smoke](#) at home.

Results showed a total of 24 percent of the 95,677 children in the study, corresponding to a weighted total of 17.6 million children across the United States, lived with smokers. About 5 percent of the children lived with someone who smokes inside the home, equivalent to a weighted sum of 3.6 million U.S. children.

Researchers said that children who lived with a smoker or who had exposure to tobacco smoke inside the home were significantly more likely to have had any medical care visit, including sick care. At the same time, researchers said, they were considerably less likely to have had any dental care visits.

Lead author Ashley Merianos, PhD, a certified health education specialist and assistant professor in the School of Human Services at the University of Cincinnati, said several previous studies already established that tobacco smoke causes physical health consequences in children, including respiratory symptoms, increased infections and

asthma flare-ups. Fewer studies had examined whether tobacco smoke exposure translates into more frequent pediatric [health care](#) visits.

"Our findings indicate that tobacco smoke exposure has a significant impact on demand for [health care services](#)," Dr. Merianos said. "Settings with a high volume of children exposed to tobacco smoke at home, including pediatric emergency departments, could serve as effective outlets for health messages to inform caregivers about the dangers of smoking around [children](#) and help decrease these potentially preventable [tobacco smoke exposure](#)-related visits and associated costs," she said.

#### More information:

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Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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