

HEALTHY BREATHING



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Health

Tips for Health Managers from the Head Start National Center on Health

How Can Programs Support Healthy Breathing for Children?

Head Start programs can help children breathe more easily by:

- Teaching staff and parents about the signs and symptoms of asthma
- Educating staff and parents about secondhand smoke and its connection to asthma
- Sharing knowledge about ways to avoid asthma triggers or attacks

Why Is It Important?

- Every place children spend time should be smoke free, all of the time.
- Secondhand smoke can be avoided and is a trigger for asthma.
- Cigarette smoke has more than 7,000 chemicals, including some that can cause cancer.
- Thirdhand smoke is a danger to children.

What Is Secondhand Smoke?

Secondhand smoke is environmental tobacco smoke. It is the smoke breathed in from the tips of cigarettes, pipes and cigars.

What Is Thirdhand Smoke?

Thirdhand smoke is smoke that stays on surfaces and fabric after a person is done smoking. Staff who smoke should make sure they have clean clothes to wear when they are working with Head Start children. Chemicals from tobacco smoke can stay on clothes for days or weeks.

What Is Asthma?

Asthma is a condition that causes a swelling and narrowing of the airways in humans. Asthma can cause wheezing, coughing, chest pains, and tiredness.



10 things you should know

- 1 Secondhand smoke is never safe. Because children are smaller and still growing, secondhand smoke is even more dangerous.
- 2 Thirdhand smoke is never safe. Adults who know the dangers of thirdhand smoke are more likely to not allow smoking in their home.
- 3 The most important thing families can do to help a child with asthma is to have a smoke-free home.
- 4 Asthma is the third most common reason for a child to be in the hospital.
- 5 Secondhand smoke can cause children with asthma to have more frequent and more severe asthma attacks.
- 6 Being near secondhand smoke can cause children without asthma to have asthma-like symptoms such as wheezing.
- 7 Secondhand smoke can cause infections like bronchitis and pneumonia.
- 8 Every year, children in the U.S. miss 10.5 million school days because of asthma.
- 9 Chemicals from tobacco smoke (thirdhand smoke) may stay in the environment for days or weeks after a cigarette is put out.
- 10 Pediatricians can help parents and staff members prevent exposure to secondhand smoke by helping them quit smoking.

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

Key Resources for Head Start Managers

American Academy of Pediatrics. *Schooled in Asthma*. Retrieved from: <http://www2.aap.org/schooledinasthma/>

American Academy of Pediatrics Julius B Richmond Center. *Educators*. Retrieved from: <http://www2.aap.org/richmondcenter/Educators.html>

This resources provide educators with lesson plans, statistics, and activities to help prevent tobacco use among America's youth.

American Lung Association. *Asthma Friendly Schools Toolkit*. Retrieved from: <http://www.lung.org/lung-disease/asthma/creating-asthma-friendly-environments/asthma-in-schools/asthma-friendly-schools-initiative/asthma-friendly-schools-initiative-toolkit.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Asthma: School and Child Care Providers*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/schools.html>

Head Start. *Legacy--The Head Start Tobacco Cessation Initiative*. Retrieved from: http://www.legacyforhealth.org/PDF/HeadStart_CessationToolkit.pdf

Oregon Head Start Association, American Lung Association of Oregon. *Tobacco-Free Environments*. Retrieved from: <http://www2.aap.org/richmondcenter/pdfs/ModelTobaccoFreePolicyforHeadStart.pdf> The policy is available as a model for those seeking to create their own policy on tobacco-free Head Start and other child care facilities.

