



MECC Cares for Kids Column – January 2014

The New Year is here, and many of us ponder resolutions for the upcoming year around healthier choices. So let us ponder on this; why is secondhand smoke so dangerous for children?

Secondhand smoke contains over 4000 chemicals including arsenic, formaldehyde, carbon monoxide, and benzene, 60 of which are known to cause cancer. The truth: there is NO such thing as a safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Minimal exposure is harmful to your health.

Secondhand smoke is dangerous to children as their bodies are still growing and developing and can slow a child's lung growth. Children exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to have increased ear infections, more severe and frequent asthma attacks, allergies, bronchitis, and pneumonia. Infants exposed have an increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Parents who smoke are not bad parents. They love their children, care for their children, and always want to protect their children from harm. There are some myths around protections from secondhand smoke exposure.

- The Distance Myth: smoking in another room or different part of the house can protect my child. The Truth: In a home or in a car, there is no safe distance between children and secondhand smoke.
- The Ventilation Myth: Opening a window or using a fan or air filter makes the air safer. The Truth: Ventilating secondhand smoke does not do enough to protect children.
- The Odor Myth: If you cannot smell secondhand smoke in the air, then the air is safe. The Truth: Even if someone can't smell secondhand smoke, he/she may still be breathing its poisonous toxins.
- The Quit Myth: Parents have to quit smoking entirely to be able to protect their children and keep the air safe in the home and car. The Truth: Parents don't have to quit smoking right away to start protecting their children right away. Take One Step, one step out your door or outside of your car.

So as we move on with the New Year, keep in mind the four myths around protecting children from secondhand smoke whether you smoke or do not, are a parent, provider, or community member, and take One Step. Resolve yourself to protect children from the dangers of secondhand smoking.

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