

Smoking and Asthma

How Does Smoking Affect Asthma?

Smoking is bad for everyone, but especially for people who have asthma. Smoking causes coughing and wheezing and makes it hard to breathe — the same problems that happen during an asthma flare-up. So if you add smoke to lungs that are already irritated, you have big-time breathing trouble.

If people have asthma and they smoke, they will probably:

- have more asthma flare-ups, with coughing and wheezing
- need more asthma medicine because it won't work as well
- visit the doctor and emergency room more often
- miss fun stuff they want to do because of asthma flare-ups

Why Do People Smoke?

You might wonder why people smoke at all. Many people start smoking when they are kids or teens and they try it for many reasons. Maybe all of their friends were doing it or they grew up in a house where all the grownups smoked.

But no matter why they started, many smokers wish they could quit. Smoking doesn't just cause problems for people who have asthma. Over time, smoking can lead to serious health problems, such as cancer and heart disease.

Quitting smoking is hard, though, because the tobacco (say: tuh-BAK-oh) in cigarettes, pipes, and cigars contains a substance called nicotine (say: NIH-kuh-teen). Nicotine is addictive (say: uh-DIK-tiv). When something is addictive, your body and mind will tell you that you need it to feel OK. If you don't get it, you might feel sick, stressed out, or crabby.

How Can I Avoid Being Around Smoke?

We hope you're not smoking! But even if you don't smoke, tobacco smoke can still cause problems. How? If you're around other people who smoke, just breathing that secondhand smoke can cause an asthma flare-up.

So be sure to ask to sit in the no-smoking section at restaurants and other places, such as ballparks. If a friend or family member smokes around you, let him or her know that it makes your asthma worse. Ask the person not to smoke in your house or car. This can really help with your asthma symptoms.

If you can't get the person to stop smoking around you, talk with your mom, dad, or another trusted adult, such as a school counselor.

Even if you try your best, you still might find yourself in a smoky situation. That's why you should always have your quick-relief medicine with you!

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