

# Some facts about children and second-hand smoke

Exposure to tobacco smoke poses grave risks to babies before and after they are born. The National Center for Health Statistics reports that babies born to smoking mothers face double the risk of low birth weight, which increases the likelihood of illness and death during infancy.

Children, especially those under age 2, are particularly vulnerable to secondhand smoke. According to an Environmental Protection Agency report, secondhand smoke causes 150,000 to 300,000 respiratory infections in infants that result in 7,500 to 15,000 hospitalizations a year.

Other effects on children include in-

creased prevalence of fluid in the middle ear, irritated upper respiratory tract, increased frequency and severity of symptoms in asthmatic children and an increased risk of asthma for other children.

In one National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect study, children in alcohol-abusing families were 3.6 times more likely to be victims of maltreatment than children from homes without alcohol abuse. The National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse reports that more than 657,000 children are seriously maltreated every year by an alcoholic or drug-abusing caretaker.