

[IMAGE]

Secondhand Smoke and Kids: A Bad Combination

The warnings have been clear. Yet, despite overwhelming evidence that secondhand smoke is detrimental to one's health, an estimated 40 percent of American children are still exposed to secondhand smoke in the home. Pediatric conditions linked with secondhand smoke include middle ear disease, sudden infant death syndrome, and a host of respiratory and behavioral problems.

Few studies have examined the effects of secondhand smoke on a child's cognitive abilities or whether exposure to secondhand smoke as a child can have long-term impact on intelligence. Researchers measured levels of cotinine, a derivative of nicotine, in the blood levels of 4,339 children, ages six to 16, and compared that information with the children's test scores on a series of math, reading and visuospatial exams.

Results: Serum cotinine levels were significantly higher among African American children than Hispanic or non-Hispanic white children. Children exposed to prenatal smoke and postnatal smoke, and children exposed to postnatal smoke alone, had higher cotinine levels than those exposed to prenatal smoke alone. Mean cotinine levels were significantly higher among children who had at least one smoker living in the home. The level of cotinine increased as the number of smokers in the house and the number of packs of cigarettes smoked per day in the house increased. Children with the highest serum cotinine level received "significantly lower" performance scores on all four tests compared to children with the lowest cotinine level. Average math scores were 7.14 points lower in children with the highest concentrations of cotinine; reading scores were 7.54 points lower. Proportionally lower scores were also seen when evaluating block design and digit span tests.

So, do right by your kids! Keep them safe from the dangers of secondhand smoke for the good of their bodies and minds. And while you're at it, why not give up smoking altogether? You'll not only reap your own health benefits, you'll be around that much longer for your kids, too. For more information on general health and wellness, visit www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/general.

Reference:

Yolton K, Dietrich K, Auinger P, et al. Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke and cognitive abilities among U.S. children and adolescents. *Environmental Health Perspectives* January 2005;113(1):98-103.

Page printed from:

http://www.toyourhealth.com/mpacms/tyh/article.php?id=503&no_paginate=true&no_b=true