

[IMAGE]

Take It Outside ... for Baby's Sake

What do asthma, ear infections, respiratory tract irritation and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) have in common? They're all possible consequences of infant exposure to secondhand smoke.

A new study shows that the only way to truly protect infants from tobacco smoke is to ban it entirely from the home. Researchers from the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom measured infant smoke exposure by testing the urine samples of infants living in homes where they were exposed to tobacco smoke. The study revealed that infants exposed to smoke had traces of cotinine, a smoking-related chemical, in their bloodstream; the higher the cotinine level, the greater the exposure. Various preventative measures used to protect infants from smoke exposure, including opening windows and not smoking in the same room, only resulted in a slight decrease in smoke exposure.

Now may be the time to kick your smoking habit altogether - if not for your own health, then for the health of your child. As this study indicates, the only way to prevent your baby from being exposed to the harmful effects of secondhand tobacco smoke is to enact a 100 percent ban of smoking in your home. If you still aren't convinced, or don't have a child, remember, quitting smoking has many personal health benefits, including decreased blood pressure; improved circulation; decreased risk of heart attack and cancer; and an improved sense of taste and smell.

Before you take that next puff, think about the effects it will have on you and your child. If you can't quit on your own, your doctor can help get you on a program that will work for you.

Reference:

Blackburn C, Spencer N, Bonas S, et al. Effect of strategies to reduce exposure of infants to environmental tobacco smoke in the home: cross-sectional survey. *British Medical Journal*, Aug. 2, 2003: Volume 327, pp.257.

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