



# Respiratory Care WA

Asthma | COPD | Respiratory Health



08 9289 3600



36 Ord Street, West Perth, WA, 6005



[respiratorycarewa.org.au](http://respiratorycarewa.org.au)

## Asthma and Smoking

Cigarette smoke, with its 4000 harmful chemicals, is a major asthma trigger. Tobacco smoke irritates the airways in the lungs, causing the cells to produce lots of mucus (phlegm). The normal cleaning action of the lungs is also affected so that the mucus and other irritants are not removed. This means that smokers and those exposed to cigarette smoke are more prone to chest and throat infections. This may trigger or worsen asthma symptoms.

### What happens if I have asthma and I smoke?

Smoking:

- Makes your asthma worse
- May increase the frequency of asthma attacks
- Makes asthma control more difficult
- Increases the risk of permanently damaging the airways
- Makes asthma medication less effective

### What is passive smoking?

Passive smoking is breathing in other people's cigarette smoke. Smoke from the burning end of a cigarette (side stream smoke) contains higher levels of some chemicals than the smoke inhaled by the smoker.

### How can passive smoking affect me if I have asthma?

It can:

- Trigger an asthma attack
- Increase the frequency of asthma attacks
- Increase the need for asthma medications
- Reduce lung function
- Increase sensitivity to other triggers in the environment like pets, pollens and chemicals

### How can smoking during pregnancy affect unborn babies?

It can:

- Cause reduced lung growth and function in the unborn baby's lungs
- Increase the chance of the newborn baby developing asthma
- Increase the likelihood of an unhealthy birth-weight baby
- Increase the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)
- Increase the risk of a number of health effects



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## Smoking around babies and children can:

- Impair their lung function
- Increase their chances of getting asthma
- Increase the frequency of their asthma attacks
- Increase the severity of their asthma symptoms
- Increase their chances of developing respiratory infections

## How can I reduce my exposure to cigarette smoke?

- If you smoke, ring the Quitline on 131 848 or ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice on quitting
- Make your home and car smoke free
- Avoid smoky environments
- Don't let anyone smoke around you or your children
- Work in a smoke free environment

## Other control measures:

- Keep your asthma under control by using preventer medications as prescribed
- Follow your asthma management plan
- Carry your reliever medication at all times and use when necessary
- Be aware of the 4 Step Asthma First Aid Plan

## For further information contact:

- Quitline 131 848 or [www.quit.org.au](http://www.quit.org.au)
- Respiratory Care WA
- Talk to your doctor, pharmacist, nurse or health worker