

Jackson County Department of Public Health

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MAKING PARENTS AWARE THE SECONDHAND SMOKE TRIGGERS ASTHMA ATTACKS

May is Asthma Awareness Month. There has never been a better time to remind parents that smoke is a strong trigger for asthma, meaning breathing it can cause asthma attacks, when breathing passages become narrow and irritated, causing coughing, wheezing, and difficulty breathing.

Asthma is a common respiratory disease that affects one in 10 North Carolina children as is a common reason for school absences. In Jackson County, 168 children per 100,000 were discharged from the hospital for asthma in 2010. Children with asthma are more likely to visit emergency rooms than children without asthma.

“An asthma attack can be frightening, and can even be life-threatening,” said Melissa McKnight Health Education Supervisor, “Avoiding triggers like secondhand smoke can keep a child with asthma out of the emergency room.”

One of the most proven methods to keep asthma under control is to remove all asthma triggers from the home and school environment. Asthma triggers may vary from patient to patient, but too often include tobacco smoke. Parents of children with asthma can help by only smoking outside of the home, but the best way to eliminate danger for children with asthma is to quit smoking if you are a parent or another adult who spends time with children.

A great first step is to make your home and car smoke-free zones, which keeps the inside air safe for everyone. If you are responsible for a child with asthma, do not take them in to smoky environments and do not allow others to smoke around them. If you live in an apartment building to another multi-unit housing complex that is not smoke-free indoors, consider working towards making your building smoke-free. A smoke-free policy can save money, reduce fire risk and will make everyone healthier—not just those with asthma.

If you or someone you know wants to quit smoking, QuitlineNC can provide free help 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or, for Spanish speakers, 1-800-Dejelo-Ya. For more information, visit www.quitline.com. For more information on asthma and the NC Asthma Alliance, visit <http://www.asthma.ncdhhs.gov/aanc.htm>.

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