



Say “No Butts” to Smoking Around Kids

Protect your child from harmful tobacco smoke

*Debby Armstrong, Executive Director
First 5 San Mateo County*

Smoking around kids is harmful, and it's especially dangerous for babies and young children because their lungs are still developing. According to the Surgeon General, there is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke for kids. Research shows that contact with secondhand smoke increases a child's risk of ear infections, and can cause asthma, pneumonia and bronchitis. That's why California no longer allows smoking in most public places or in cars when a child is present.

Unfortunately, the dangers of secondhand smoke don't disappear after someone finishes smoking a cigarette or cigar. In fact, the poisonous chemicals from tobacco smoke stay in the air and hidden in objects for a long time – this is commonly referred to as “third-hand smoke.”

The American Cancer Society is urging people to quit smoking this November as part of its annual Great American Smokeout. In support of this effort, remember to take the following steps to protect your children from smoke:

- **Keep your home smoke-free.** If family or friends want to smoke, ask them to go outside. Opening a window in the house is not enough to let all the smoke out.
- **Clean items exposed to smoke.** Third-hand smoke stays on everything for a long time – including people's hair and clothes, and on curtains, furniture, carpets and toys. Wash objects that are exposed to smoke before letting your child touch them. If you are around someone who smokes, change your clothes before holding your child.
- **Check your child care environment.** Before deciding on child care or preschool, ask providers about their smoking policy. As a parent, you want to make sure the location is a healthy and smoke-free place where your child can learn and grow.
- **Don't smoke in a car with kids.** California law bans adults from smoking in cars when kids are present because the secondhand smoke greatly affects air quality, making it very harmful for young children. So follow the law and don't light up!
- **Be a role model.** According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, parents who smoke increase the odds that their children will become smokers, too. If you are a smoker, the best way to protect your family's health and your own is to quit smoking.

You don't have to try to quit alone – there is free help. Double your chances of quitting by calling the California Smokers' Helpline at 1-800-NO-BUTTS and visiting www.tobaccofreeca.com.

For more information, contact First 5 San Mateo County at (650) 372-9500 or www.first5sanmateo.org and www.first5california.com/parents.

About First 5 San Mateo County

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to support programs for expectant parents and children ages 0 to 5. First 5 San Mateo County distributes Prop. 10 revenues to programs and services that meet local needs.