

Asthma Triggers in the Car: Second-Hand Smoke

Did you know second-hand smoke is one of the most common environmental triggers for an asthma episode?

Second-hand smoke, even in small amounts, is proven harmful to children and adults. It can bring on an asthma episode. Children are most frequently exposed to second-hand smoke in the car and in the home. A top protection is to eliminate tobacco in the car and home. The best way to protect a child from second-hand smoke is eliminating smoking in the car and home.

Car Rules and Tips

- Never allow smoking in the car or around the car.
- Put a no smoking sign in the car as a friendly reminder to guest passengers.
- Stop using the ashtray for ashes. Instead collect coins.
- Clean the car at least once a week. Wipe surfaces with non-toxic cleaner or a damp cloth. Wash removable items regularly. Vacuum the car using a HEPA filter fitted vacuum.

Tips for Smokers:

- To protect children and those with asthma avoid smoking in the car at all times.
- It is recommended that temporary craving prevention be used when traveling such as nicotine replacement patches, gum and sprays.
- Remove cigarettes, tobacco and lighters from the car and vacuum the ashtray.
- Get assistance from the Tobacco Quit line: 1 800 QUIT NOW

Not smoking is the best protection against second-hand tobacco in the car.

Can I just roll down the window while a person smokes in the car?

- Rolling down the window does not protect against second-hand tobacco smoke. Doing this while a person smokes is not enough to lower the smoke in the car. Remember no amount of smoke is safe, especially for children, teens, and people with asthma.
- Keep in mind that often second-hand smoke is simply blown back into the car or never makes it out of the car. Usually chemicals float to the back of the car typically where children and teens are sitting.
- Rolling down the window exposes those with asthma to more environmental triggers. The best bet is not to allow smoking in the car.

“I smoke only when children or those with asthma are not in the car? That’s okay, right?”

- Not allowing smoking in the cars at all times is the safest protection you can offer.
- Second-hand smoke lingers in the air and settles on surfaces, seats, carpets in the car. This residue and air pollution is enough to trigger an asthma attack.

“I’m doing fine. I only smoke once in awhile in the car? How bad is that?”

- Since the space in a car or truck is small, second-hand smoke is more toxic. It is best to never smoke in the vehicle.
- Remember, cigarette fumes will settle on the surfaces, seats, and carpets. This is not healthy for anyone and may worsen asthma symptoms.
- Don’t forget any amount of second-hand smoke is harmful to passengers.
- Second-hand smoke at any time can trigger an asthma episode or “attack.”

“Can’t I just use car air freshener to hide the smoke smell?”

- Second-hand smoke is harmful even when we can’t see or smell it.
- Fragrances in the forms of sprays or hanging from the mirror only mask the smell of smoke. This does not take the smoke away. These fragrances only become another irritant to worry about. It is safest to never allow smoking in the car to avoid asthma triggers.