

To Parents – about Children and second-hand smoke

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TO PARENTS WHO SMOKE

Having a child generally changes the lives of new parents. Most change their habits to make things easier for their families.

But how far should one go if one is a smoker?

There's no doubt about it – it's best for both you and your child that you give up smoking entirely. If you aren't ready to quit smoking right now, you can nevertheless protect your child from the damaging effects of tobacco smoke.

Don't smoke near your child

Tobacco smoke is harmful to children. It is therefore important that you are not near your child when you smoke.

On the next page, you can find advice on how to protect your child from tobacco smoke.

Many people see having children as an occasion for stopping smoking. Therefore, there is also a section on how people can stop smoking when they are ready to do so.

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Parents are responsible for making sure that their child grows up in a smoke-free environment

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Children and second-hand smoke

Young children's respiratory tracts are proportionately very narrow, making them particular sensitive to tobacco smoke.

Second-hand smoke causes children to fall ill more frequently than they otherwise would and puts them at a higher risk of coming down with pneumonia, ear infections and asthmatic bronchitis. In addition, second-hand smoke causes all kinds of discomfort such as eye irritation and headaches.

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IF YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT STOPPING SMOKING

Many people see having children as an occasion for stopping smoking.

It doesn't have to be difficult to stop if one thinks of oneself as being freed, not making a sacrifice.

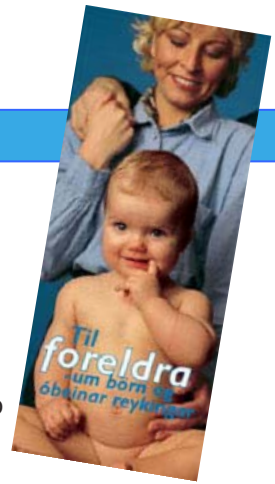
Many people try to stop again and again before they are successful. If you have tried to quit before without luck, the chances that you will be successful now are higher.

Remember, practice makes perfect. You will be more able to quit with every attempt.

Do you want to stop smoking?

Prepare for stopping smoking – it's a big decision. Remember that your attitude makes a huge difference.

If you feel as if you are missing out on something by stopping smoking, think of all the benefits of quitting – both for you and your children.



Help for those who want to quit

Some smokers choose to stop on their own, but many others find it beneficial to receive advice and guidance from others. Therefore, a choice of educational materials and phone counselling are available to smokers who want to quit.

This assistance can help people to prepare themselves so that the likelihood that they will succeed in quitting will be higher.

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Further reading

- Nýtt líf án tóbaks: Ráð til að hætta reykingum. Available free of charge from the Public Health Institute of Iceland (www.lydheilsustod.is), at health care clinics and in many pharmacies.
- Booklets on nicotine replacement products and nicotine-free products. Available free of charge in pharmacies.
- Þú getur hætt að reykja. Book by Guðjón Bergmann. Available in most bookstores.

Courses for those who wish to stop smoking are held by (among others):

- The Icelandic Cancer Society, tel. 540 1900/www.krabb.is.
- The NLFÍ Rehabilitation and Health Clinic, tel. 483 0300/www.hnlfí.is.
- Easyway Iceland, tel. 899 4094/www.easyway.is

- It is possible to get assistance from doctors and nurses at health care clinics.

It is also possible for those who wish to quit to get free personal counsel by calling 800 6030 or visiting www.8006030.is (website in Icelandic).

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IF YOU AREN'T READY...

Even if you aren't ready to stop smoking, you can still significantly reduce the risk of your child being harmed by the smoke. In order to do so, you must follow several very simple rules.

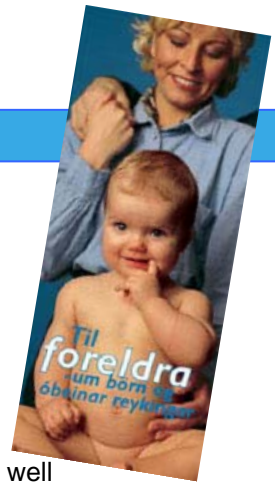
What happens to the smoke?

The smoke that smoulders from the lit end of a cigarette is more dangerous than the smoke that the smoker sucks in. When one smokes inside, the smoke diffuses throughout the entire place, from room to room. It is important to keep in mind that up to 85% of tobacco smoke is both invisible and odourless but remains harmful nonetheless.

A smoke-free home – for the child

It is important when a child is living in a household that the other inhabitants make the decision to not smoke in the household. The one way to protect a child from the harmful effects of tobacco smoke is to smoke outside, at a good distance from the child. Smoking by an open window or under the range hood has little or no effect. Make sure that everyone is in agreement that the interests of the child come first and that it is a priority to protect the child from tobacco smoke.

A decision about smoking should also apply to guests. In the section "Friendship and smoking", you can find good advice on how to talk to your friends and family about smoking.



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Clean air – some advice

- Keep the home smoke-free, always smoke outside and ask others to do so as well
- Never smoke around the child
- Don't smoke in the car – smoke before you set out or take a cigarette break
- Request that relatives and friends who take care of the child not smoke around her or him
- When you are out with your family, choose a smoke-free environment, such as a smoke-free restaurant.

The above advice does not apply to small children only – all children have the right to a smoke-free environment, no matter how old they are.

TO PARENTS WHO DON'T SMOKE

Most people wish their homes to be smoke-free. Some people find it difficult to forbid others from smoking in their homes, but it is common nowadays that smokers ask for permission to do so first, providing an opportunity to say that smoking is not permitted inside the home and that smokers should smoke outside.

Talk to smokers

It is important to protect children from smoke. Should children be exposed to second-hand smoke, their chances of falling ill increase. Smoke also causes eye irritations and headaches. Therefore, it's necessary to talk to smokers about the effects of smoke. But the way in which you do so makes a big difference. Smokers are mentally and physically addicted to nicotine. Comments such as "Can't you just skip it?" are seldom effective.

Try instead to provide good suggestions of how to be considerate to the child.

Is it all right to smoke in the home?

It is important when a child is living in a household that the decision be made not to smoke in the household. Keep in mind that the one way to protect children from the damaging effects of tobacco smoke is to forbid smoking in around the child.

The discussion must centre around how best to protect the child from tobacco smoke by limiting smoking, not on how the smoker should stop smoking. The subject can be a difficult and emotional one, and it is therefore important that it revolves around respecting the child's right to breathe in clean air, not the smoker's attitude towards quitting.

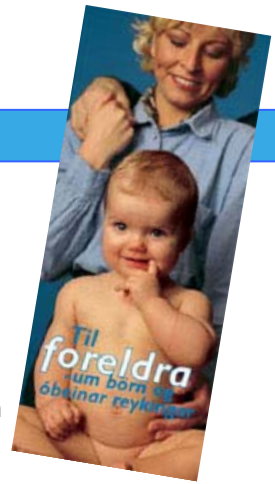
It is sometimes necessary to discuss matters more than once in order to arrive at a consensus.

Don't give up on being able to find a mutually acceptable solution. You can find the way that suits you best. Read the section "If you aren't ready to stop smoking" together, where you can perhaps get ideas on how to limit smoking.

Dagbjört, mother of Ingólfur (2), doesn't smoke:

My boyfriend smokes. It really started to bother me when I became pregnant. Because I was so sensitive to smells. I complained a great deal about the smoking and he started smoking by an open window. But when I came home from the hospital with the little guy in a carrycot, Pétur agreed to start smoking outside.

I find it sometimes difficult to tell people that my home is smoke-free, but it's much easier when people see that my boyfriend only smokes outside. I often end up in arguments with old friends I haven't seen in a long time when they begin complaining that they ought to get an exception. Especially if the weather's bad. The more often I forbid people to smoke in my home, the easier it becomes, and I think that most people who come in to my house nowadays know what the rules are.



FRIENDSHIP AND SECOND-HAND SMOKE

Sometimes a smoker lights up a cigarette without thinking about it, even though children may be nearby. Therefore, it's important to talk about second-hand smoke with friends and relatives.

Get annoyed with the smoke, not the smoker

Recognise clearly that the problem is the smoke – not the smoker. It's worthwhile to discuss with smokers how smoke affects children – how particularly sensitive they are to smoke and how it's best for them to live in a place that is smoke-free.

When you go for a visit

It can be more difficult to limit smoking when visiting others. But most smokers are willing to show consideration if you discuss matters with them. If you intend to sleep over on a visit, make sure that the child sleeps in a room where no one smokes.

Jóhann, father of Elín (2), Smokes:

There is no smoking at our place. This rule also applies to guests. If my friends want to smoke, I ask them to come out onto the balcony. They've never complained – they know it's because of Elín, and I'm not making any apologies about it.

I don't enjoy smoking if children are around, plain and simple, and I think it's goes without saying that we should show them consideration. Fortunately, most smokers realise the effects of second-hand smoke – I remember well how disgusting I thought the smoke was when I was a child.

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INFLAMMABLE GRANDMAS AND GRANDPAS

Grandmothers and grandfathers often spend a great deal of time with their grandchildren. They want all the best for their grandchildren. They're therefore generally very open to comments on smoking.

The older generation may not have kept up as much with discussions on second-hand smoke. If so, you can suggest to them that they should read the section "Facts about second-hand smoke".

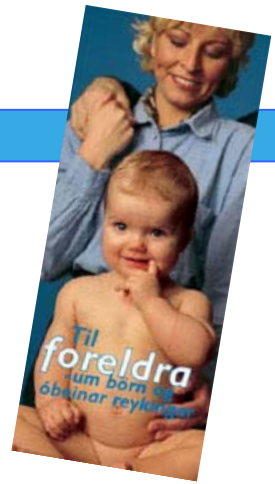
In general, it's most effective to decide on several simple rules, such as:

- Never smoke around the child.
- Smoke outside.
- Never smoke in the car when the child is present.

Birgitta, mother of Andrés (7) and Nína (4), former smoker:

Shortly after Andrés was born, a smoker came to visit us. It didn't even occur to Me to complain about the smoking before Andrés started coughing. This led to us making the decision to ban smoking at our place – especially because several friends and family member smoke. I've always asked people to go outside to smoke since.

Our friends and family have gradually come to the realisation that there is no smoking at our place, and they just go outside to smoke.



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WHEN OTHERS ARE TAKING CARE OF YOUR CHILD OR YOUR CHILD IS TAKING PART IN RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Smoking is strictly banned in all preschools, primary schools and day-care centres in Iceland. Smoking is also banned on premises that are intended first and foremost for social, athletic and recreational activities for children and youth, as well as at all public gatherings indoors that are primarily aimed at children and youth. If this rule is not abided by, it goes without saying that you should talk to the party or parties in question. It is possible both to bring up tobacco control legislation and to educate the individual(s) in question about the harmful effects of second-hand smoking.

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Does the baby-sitter smoke?

It is very common that people need to hire a baby-sitter. It is perfectly natural to require that he or she be a non-smoker. If he or she does smoke, however, it is important to go through the rules that are to be followed in the home and around the child.

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FACTS ABOUT CHILDREN AND SECOND-HAND SMOKE

Second-hand smoke

Children smoke indirectly when smoking takes place near them. When someone smokes, they are polluting the environment both with the smoke that they breathe out and the smoke that smoulders from the cigarette's lit end – this smoke is very dangerous.

It's thus very important to protect children from tobacco smoke.

Children are particularly sensitive to smoke

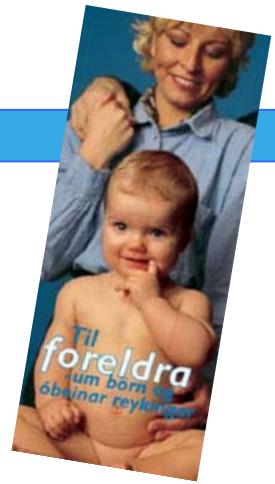
Young children's respiratory tracts are proportionately very narrow, making them particularly sensitive to tobacco smoke.

The smoke also makes children more vulnerable to bacteria. Children who breathe in tobacco smoke on a regular basis are two to four times more likely to develop respiratory infections than children not exposed to second-hand smoke.

Smoking interferes with breastfeeding

Babies have a very good sense of smell that allows them to recognise and find their mother's breasts more easily. Smoking can both make it more difficult to begin breastfeeding and result in earlier weaning. This can have to do with the fact that smoking affects the hormone prolactin, decreasing amount of milk the body produces.

Nicotine from cigarettes is carried in the milk to the baby, where it is three times more potent than in the mother's body. But even if a mother does smoke, it's still best for the baby to breastfeed – but do make sure not to smoke for one and a half hours before feeding. This will mean that the amount of nicotine and other poisonous substances will be less than otherwise.



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Smoking causes children to become sick

If smoking takes place around children, it increases their risk of coming down with illnesses:

- Second-hand smoke can cause children to develop asthma.
- Children with asthma often have asthma attacks when around smokers.
- Children get ear infections more often if smoking takes place in their home.
- Babies whose parents smoke are more likely to be colicky than babies whose parents don't.
- Children whose parents who smoke are hospitalised more often.
- Children who are exposed to second-hand smoke are more likely to develop allergies.

Smoking increases the risk of SIDS (crib/cot death)

When a baby dies unexpectedly in its first year, the cause of death is diagnosed as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), also known as crib/cot death. Luckily, this syndrome is rare. If a mother smokes during her pregnancy and her child continues to be exposed to tobacco smoke after birth, the risk is higher. The risk is also higher if a baby is not exposed to tobacco smoke before it is born but is then exposed to it after it is born.

This risk increases in proportion to the amount of tobacco smoke in the baby's environment. The Directorate of Health's information leaflet includes the following advice:

- Always put the baby to sleep on its back or on its side.
- Avoid smoking during pregnancy and protect the child from tobacco smoke after birth.
- Also avoid consuming alcohol and other drugs.
- Don't set a pillow under a baby's head.
- Avoid bundling up the baby too well when it is sleeping.
- Breastfeed the baby if possible.

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Useful addresses and educational materials

Those who are interested in learning more about tobacco prevention or in getting assistance in quitting. Below are a list of good websites, both Icelandic and non-Icelandic.

Icelandic websites:

www.lydheilsustod.is
www.8006030.is
www.doktor.is
www.krabb.is
www.landlaeknir.is
www.hjarta.is
www.hnfli.is
www.easyway.is

Websites in other languages (non-Icelandic):

www.givingupsmoking.co.uk (in English)

www.ash.org.uk (in English)

www.tobaksfakta.org (in Swedish)

www.tobakk.no (in Norwegian)

www.tobaccofreekids.org (in English)

www.who.int (in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish)



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FREE EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

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Useful addresses

The Public Health Institute of Iceland

Laugavegur 116

105 Reykjavík

Telephone: 5800 900

www.lydheilsustod.is

The Icelandic Cancer Society

Skógarhlíð 8

125 Reykjavík

Telephone: 540 1900

www.krabb.is

The Directorate of Health

Austurströnd 5

170 Seltjarnarnes

Telephone: 510 1900

www.landlaeknir.is

The Icelandic Heart Association

Holtasmári 1

201 Kópavogur

Telephone: 535 1800

www.hjarta.is

The Icelandic Asthma and Allergy Society

Síðumúli 6

108 Reykjavík

Telephone: 552 2153

www.ao.is

COMMENTS AND HOUSEHOLD AGREEMENTS