



**PRESS RELEASE
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Secondhand Smoke Hurts Children

First 5 Yolo Reminds Parents of Importance of “Smoke-Free Cars with Minors” Law

Woodland, CA — Research shows when someone is smoking in a car, the air quality decreases substantially and can reach almost 10 times the hazardous levels set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Children are particularly vulnerable to the health effects caused by secondhand smoke.

California’s “Smoke-free Cars with Minors” law, which took effect January 1, 2008, prohibits smoking in a motor vehicle when a minor (17 years old and under) is present. A violation is punishable by a fine of up to \$100.

“First 5 Yolo reminds parents about the one-year anniversary of this important law and the negative effects of secondhand smoke on children,” said Julie Gallelo, executive director of First 5 Yolo. “Children exposed to secondhand smoke are at increased risk of asthma attacks, ear infections, bronchitis and pneumonia. It’s very important adults do not smoke around children.”

According to the 2005 California Health Interview Study, 9.6 percent of adults in Yolo County currently smoke. Additionally, the study found that 5 percent of adults and children in Yolo County are exposed to secondhand smoke in their homes. Even though smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke is not the only risk factor for asthma, exposure to tobacco smoke does put people at increased risk for asthma and its symptoms. In Yolo County, 18.2 percent of children ages 0 to 17 have been diagnosed with asthma. Other risk factors include obesity, poverty, workplace exposures and outdoor air pollutants, according to California Breathing.

As a reminder of the harmful effects of secondhand smoke, First 5 Yolo offers the following facts:

- The Surgeon General has concluded there is no risk-free level of secondhand smoke exposure. Even brief exposures can be harmful.
- Secondhand smoke contains more than 250 chemicals known to be toxic or carcinogenic (cancer-causing), including formaldehyde, benzene, vinyl chloride, arsenic, ammonia and hydrogen cyanide. Children who are exposed to secondhand smoke are inhaling many of the same cancer-causing substances and poisons as smokers.
- Children who live in homes where smoking is allowed have higher cotinine (a biological marker of secondhand smoke exposure) levels than children who live in non-smoking homes.
- As infants’ and young children’s bodies develop, they are especially vulnerable to the poisons in secondhand smoke.

- Both babies whose mothers smoke while pregnant and babies who are exposed to secondhand smoke after birth are more likely to die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and have weaker lungs, which increases the risk for many health problems, than babies who are not exposed to cigarette smoke.
- Babies whose mothers smoke during pregnancy are more likely to have lower birth weights, which makes them weaker and increases the risk for many health problems.
- Secondhand smoke exposure can cause bronchitis and pneumonia in infants and young children and causes respiratory symptoms, including coughing, phlegm, wheezing and breathlessness among school-aged children.
- Secondhand smoke exposure increases the frequency and severity of asthma attacks in children.
- Children exposed to secondhand smoke are at increased risk for ear infections and are more likely to need an operation to insert ear tubes for drainage.

First 5 Yolo reminds parents to help make sure kids don't breathe secondhand smoke. It's good for their health – and their children.

To quit smoking, call the California smokers' helpline at 1-800-NO-BUTTS and visit www.tobaccofreeca.com/quitting.

Sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Surgeon General; California Health Interview Study; and California Breathing

About First 5 Yolo

Research shows 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. In November 1998, California voters passed a statewide ballot initiative to add a 50-cent-per-pack tax on cigarettes. The funds collected are utilized to fund education, health and childcare programs that promote early childhood development from prenatal through age 5. For more information about First 5 Yolo, please visit www.First5Yolo.org.

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