



December 2003

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH DRIVE TO HIGHLIGHT HEALTH RISKS OF SMOKING NEAR CHILDREN

A Department of Health campaign to highlight the health risks to children when adults smoke near them is underway with advertisements appearing in North West cinemas, newspapers, TV screens and display posters.

Around 42% of children in the North West live in a house where at least one person smokes, and approximately one-third of all smokers say they continue to smoke when near children – that's over four million adults nationwide. The campaign drives home the health risks to children with the message: "If you smoke, I smoke".

During the summer, the Department of Health ran hard-hitting TV ads showing young children and babies appearing to exhale tobacco smoke. These ads will be running again this month in *the North West* and will be supported by:

- billboard posters appearing in Bolton, Bury, Manchester City Centre, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Wigan, Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens Sefton and Wirral;
- cinema advertising in AMC, Cineworld, Hollinwood, Odeon and UCI for showings of *Brother Bear* and *Children's Reel*;
- the production of bibs for babies carrying the "if you smoke, I smoke" message.
- press advertising in national dailies and Sunday papers

The activity highlights that children are 'smoking too' when they breathe in secondhand smoke (also called passive smoke), and that this can increase their risk of going to hospital with serious illnesses, for example bronchitis and pneumonia.

Smoking near children has been linked in scientific studies to increased likelihood of cot death, asthma attacks, asthma itself, breathing problems and ear disease.

Brenda Fullard, Regional Tobacco Policy Manager, said: "People in the North West need to wake up to the dangers of secondhand smoke to our children. The term passive smoking is misleading – there's nothing passive about smoking near kids and increasing their chances of getting pneumonia or bronchitis.

“This is a serious health issue and all of us need to ensure that children in the North West are not exposed to the poisons in secondhand smoke. This campaign is not just about parents, it’s for relatives, friends, carers too – any smokers who spend time with children. We know people are concerned about the dangers of secondhand smoke, but now’s the time to take action to protect children”

Secondhand smoke contains 4,000 different chemicals, many of which are highly toxic. These include arsenic, benzene, formaldehyde and hydrogen cyanide. Over fifty of the chemicals in second-hand smoke are carcinogens.

Secondhand smoke consists of side stream smoke from the burning tip of the cigarette, and main stream smoke exhaled by the smoker. Side stream smoke typically makes up about 85% of the pollution in the room where there are smokers, and contains a higher concentration of some toxins, including hydrogen cyanide, than the smoke exhaled by the smoker.

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Notes to editors

1. From BMA calculations based on 2001 statistics from Office of National Statistics (ONS)
2. NHS advice to parents and carers who smoke is:

The ideal thing would be to try to stop smoking. For anyone considering stopping there is plenty of help and support available, such as the **NHS Smoking Helpline on 0800 169 0 169**. Callers receive a free information pack with details on how to stop smoking and the different treatments available. You can also receive details of your local free NHS Stop Smoking service.

If you choose not to stop smoking:

- Help protect children by keeping their playing, sleeping and eating areas totally smoke free
- Smoke outside whenever possible
- When out and about with children, find non-smoking areas
- If friends and family smoke, let them know before they visit that you are keeping your home smoke-free for your children’s health. Ask if they would help by smoking outside or before they visit. Explain that children get ill through secondhand smoking.
- Secondhand smoke gets even more concentrated in a car. You can reduce children’s travel sickness and make a positive difference to their health by avoiding smoking when they travel with you.

- On short trips, if you are going to smoke, then smoke before you set off, not in the car. On longer trips, again if you want to smoke, stop and do so outside the car, away from the children.
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- High resolution visuals (and Beta SP tapes) of the campaign materials are available on request from Helen Sanders.
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- The TV advert will run until 31 December; posters until 31st December; and cinema advertising until 16 January. Artwork for the bibs and billboards are available from Helen Sanders
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