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Secondhand Smoke May Double Risk of Hospitalization for Kids With Asthma

Exposure can worsen symptoms and make the disease more difficult to manage, researchers say
By Mary Elizabeth Dallas

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THURSDAY, Sept. 24, 2015 (HealthDay News) -- Exposure to secondhand smoke puts children with asthma at nearly double the risk of winding up in the hospital, a new analysis reveals.

For these kids, secondhand smoke can worsen symptoms and make their condition more difficult to control. So parents need to be aware of these additional risks, the researchers warned.

"Previous studies have linked secondhand smoke exposure with increased asthma prevalence, poorer asthma control and increased symptoms," lead study author Zhen Wang, from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., said in an American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology news release.

"We wanted to quantify the strength of the association, and to show just how much greater the risk is of hospitalization for kids with asthma who are

exposed to secondhand smoke in the home," Wang added.

One expert said the findings make sense.

"Having treated children and adults with asthma over the years, I am not surprised that frequent, continuous exposure to secondhand smoke in the home would result in more exacerbations and, consequently, a greater likelihood of hospitalization," said Dr. Beth Corn. She is an associate professor of medicine, and clinical immunology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, in New York City.

The review included 25 studies involving more than 430,000 children with an average age of 7.6 years.

Children may be more negatively affected by exposure to tobacco smoke than adults, because their lungs and immune systems are still developing, the researchers explained.

Secondhand smoke can also inhibit growth of the lungs, according to the findings published Sept. 24 in the *Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology*.

"The results of this review serve as a reminder to parents of just how dangerous it is to expose their children to secondhand smoke," study senior author Dr. Avni Joshi, a Mayo Clinic allergist, said in the news release.

"Controlled asthma means fewer emergency room visits, [less] hospitalizations and proper use of long-term controller medications," Joshi said.

"Some allergists have developed family-centered tobacco control programs which address parents' tobacco use during a clinic visit for a child with asthma," she added.

SOURCES: Beth Corn, M.D., associate professor, medicine and clinical immunology, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York City; American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, news release, Sept. 24, 2015