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Creating No Tobacco Zone around children

Tobacco use is a serious public health challenge in several regions of the world. It may lead to an epidemic resulting in disability, disease and death. It is estimated that five million preventable deaths occur every year globally, attributable to tobacco use. At this rate, the number of such deaths is expected to double by 2020. In addition to damage to personal health, tobacco use may result in reduced productivity and health care burden, environmental damage and poverty of the families. India has been very conscious of the harmful effects of tobacco use and related social problems.

Secondhand smoke (SHS) exposure is a significant problem in India, at both indoor and outdoor. A study has shown that 70% to 80% of the male smokers regularly smoked in home, 3 in every 10 adults working indoor are exposed to SHS. About 23% of adults have reported SHS exposure at public places. Secondhand smoke exposure has a bearing to be future smokers

Children are at increased risk, when exposed to third hand smoke (THS) toxicants due to their exploratory behavior and metabolic activity. Dust ingestion was identified as a major source of exposure to pollutants in toddlers. This is of enormous importance in India as houses especially in urban slums are compact with poor ventilation. Nicotine is the main component in THS. Third hand smoke causes significant DNA damage in human cells. Small children are particularly vulnerable as they are exposed to THS/toxicants via inhalation, ingestion, and dermal contact. And also, there is increased risk of cancer in children (1-16 years).

We all want to be there for our children for as long as possible. Smoking can cut one's lifespan by almost 10 years. Perhaps a good reason for us to consider quitting.

Precautions you should take:

- Set a strict no smoking rule in the house.
- If someone needs to smoke, they must do it outside the house.
- Make sure after smoking, hands and face must be washed.
- It is important for both parents to be aware of the harmful effects of nicotine on children. Once you are aware you can share your learning with your family members and politely yet firmly request not to smoke in the presence of children.
- If you smoke, it is best to avoid smoking when children are around. It is important to know that smoking even in different room does not ensure sufficient protection for your child.

Remember, children do what they see and not what they hear. So, be a good role model for them.


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