

Most parents support checking them for tobacco smoke exposure

21 March 2011, By Marty Ray



Tests to measure children's exposure to tobacco smoke are available but are not currently done as part of routine pediatric health care. One potential barrier to testing children for such exposure has been the belief that parents who smoke would not want their child tested. Credit: Kris Snibbe/Harvard Staff Photographer

Sixty percent of parents, whether they smoke or not, said they would like to have their children tested for tobacco smoke exposure during pediatric visits, according to a new study released online on Monday (March 21).

The study, led by researchers at the Center for Child and Adolescent [Health Policy](#) at MassGeneral Hospital for [Children](#) (MGHfC), is the first one nationally to assess whether testing children for such smoke as part of a regular [primary care](#) visit is acceptable to parents. It will appear in print in the April issue of [Pediatrics](#).

"The surprising result here is that parents who smoke want their own children tested for [tobacco smoke](#) exposure," said Jonathan Winickoff of MGHfC, who is an associate professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and lead author of the study. "This may signal the general recognition among parents, even among those who smoke, that there is no safe level of tobacco smoke exposure, and their desire to know whether

their child is exposed."

Other research from this group has recently shown that children who live in multiunit housing have a high probability of being exposed to tobacco smoke even when no one smokes in their unit.

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In this national random-dialed telephone survey of U.S. households, conducted from September to November 2006, out of 2,070 eligible respondents contacted, 1,803 (87.1 percent) completed the surveys. Among 477 parents in the sample, 60.1 percent thought that children should be tested for [tobacco smoke exposure](#) at their child's doctor visit. Among the parental smokers sampled, 62 percent thought that children should be tested.

"When parents and child clinicians see the actual exposure data, they will be better equipped to advocate for clean air in homes and cars, to encourage landlords to establish smoke-free multiunit housing, and to help [parents](#) get the assistance they need to quit smoking," said Winickoff.

Provided by Harvard University

APA citation: Most parents support checking them for tobacco smoke exposure (2011, March 21)
retrieved 23 May 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-03-parents-tobacco-exposure.html>

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