



Pediatricians urged to protect children from secondhand smoke

AAP Immediate Past President Jay E. Berkelhamer, M.D., FAAP, and Acting Surgeon General Rear Admiral Kenneth P. Moritsugu, M.D., M.P.H., are asking pediatricians to protect all children from the dangers of secondhand smoke.

In a Sept. 18 press conference, Drs. Berkelhamer and Moritsugu called on pediatricians and other health care professionals to counsel parents to protect their children from secondhand smoke as a regular part of their care by:

- routinely screening children to identify household members who smoke;
- advising parents to take steps to eliminate children's smoke exposure; and
- providing information to help parents quit smoking.

Children exposed to secondhand smoke are at increased risk for serious health problems, including asthma, respiratory infections, decreased lung growth and exercise



AAP Immediate Past President Jay E. Berkelhamer, M.D., FAAP (left), and Acting Surgeon General Rear Admiral Kenneth P. Moritsugu, M.D., M.P.H., highlighted efforts to shield children from tobacco smoke, at a recent press conference.

tolerance, and sudden infant death syndrome, according to the 2006 Surgeon General's report, *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke*.

"The Academy urges all pediatricians to help eliminate children's exposure to tobacco smoke by helping parents quit and by

encouraging strict no-smoking rules in all places where children spend time," Dr. Berkelhamer said. "If a parent is too dependent on nicotine to quit immediately, the AAP urges parents while advancing toward quitting to adopt strict no-smoking policies everywhere a child might be exposed — at home and at school, at sitters and day cares, and in cars at all times."

Resources pediatricians can use to protect patients from secondhand smoke are available on the Web site of the AAP Julius B. Richmond Center, www.aap.org/richmondcenter. Links to the statements made by Dr. Berkelhamer and Dr. Moritsugu also are available on the Web site.

The Richmond Center is dedicated to the elimination of children's exposure to tobacco and secondhand smoke and is supported by a grant from the Flight Attendant Medical Research Institute.