



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
April 26, 2011

For More Information, Contact:  
Michelle Walker  
Tobacco Prevention and Control Program  
North Dakota Department of Health  
Phone: 701.328.2315  
E-mail: [mlwalker@nd.gov](mailto:mlwalker@nd.gov)

### **Department of Health Launches Campaign To Educate About Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and Secondhand Smoke**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health, in conjunction with the Partnership for Tobacco Prevention and Cessation for Women of Reproductive Age, recently began an education campaign directed at showing the relationship between sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and secondhand smoke. According to Michelle Walker, Cessation Program director for the North Dakota Department of Health, the goal of the campaign is to encourage North Dakota tobacco users not to smoke or use tobacco around infants and children, or while pregnant.

Secondhand smoke is a mixture of gases and particles that come from the burning end of a cigarette, cigar or pipe, along with the smoke breathed out by smokers. Secondhand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, including more than 50 that can cause cancer.

“SIDS is the leading cause of death in babies between the ages of 1 month and 1 year,” said Kim Mertz, director of the Division of Family Health for the North Dakota Department of Health. “If anyone is smoking in the home where a baby lives or is cared for, that baby is inhaling the toxic chemicals from the smoke and is suffering the effects – which could include a higher risk of dying from SIDS.”

The 2006 Surgeon General’s Report, *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke*, reports the following facts:

- Babies who breathe secondhand smoke after they are born are more likely to die of SIDS.
- Mothers who smoke during pregnancy are more likely to have their babies die of SIDS.
- Smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke during pregnancy can lead to a low birth-weight baby and can reduce a baby’s lung function.

– more –

- During pregnancy, many of the compounds in secondhand smoke change the way a baby's brain develops.
- Babies who breathe secondhand smoke have weaker lungs. Their breathing problems can continue as they grow older and even when they become adults.

According to Walker, SIDS can't be predicted or prevented; however, there are things you can do to reduce your baby's risk of dying from SIDS, and his or her risk of having other health problems due to secondhand smoke.

“Never smoke around your baby. If you smoke, get help with quitting,” said Walker. “Don't allow anyone else to smoke in your home or around your baby either, including family members and babysitters. And don't take your baby to public places where people are smoking. Protecting your baby from secondhand smoke could be a matter of life and death.”

If you would like help quitting smoking or tobacco use, call the North Dakota Tobacco Quitline toll-free at 1.800.QUIT.NOW (1.800.784.8669), or log on to North Dakota QuitNet at [www.nd.quitnet.com](http://www.nd.quitnet.com).

For more information about SIDS or the relationship between SIDS and secondhand smoke, log on to [www.ndhealth.gov/SIDS](http://www.ndhealth.gov/SIDS) or call 701.328.4532.

– 30 –

*Please note: To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at [www.nddohpressroom.gov](http://www.nddohpressroom.gov).*