

NEW YORK POST

July 22, 2008
Circ: 667,119

BRITNEY A PUFF MOMMY

GETS FIX AS TOT PLAYS WITH CIGS AND LIGHTER

By DAVID K. LI



Britney takes a puff while Sean Preston, tries to snag Mommy's cigs.

Her hopes to win Mother of the Year have gone up in smoke.

It's bad enough that [Britney Spears](#) can't even keep a lid on her nasty cigarette habit long enough to avoid lighting up in front of one of her young sons, Sean Preston, 2 1/2. But then to leave her dirty cancer sticks and lighter within easy reach of the toddler?

The curious youngster went to pick them up from a table ashtray at her Beverly Hills home Sunday, as his bikini-clad, part-time mother took a long drag on her Marlboro.

Fortunately, Spears finally sprang into action and snatched them from him.

Still, she left the child to be exposed to her unhealthy, secondhand smoke.

"The pictures are sad on many levels," said Dr. Jonathan Field, director of the allergy and asthma clinic at NYU Hospital.

"We think of people who smoke as outside the norm, so just seeing a picture of someone smoking is odd - seeing someone smoking in front of their little child is shocking."

Countless studies have proven links between secondhand smoke and a laundry list of childhood maladies, including ear infections, SIDS, bronchitis, asthma and other respiratory ailments.

After seeing the photos, Russ Sciandra, the American Cancer Society's point man on tobacco policy, ripped Spears as a bad mom and bad celeb.

"Parents who smoke are a poor role model for their children," he scolded. "Celebrities who smoke are a poor model for everyone's children."

Spears and ex-hubby Kevin Federline settled their custody dispute just last week, agreeing that she'll remain a second-string parent who'll see the kids two days and one night a week.

Still, even given these troubling photos, a family-law lawyer said courts don't equate smoking with bad parenting.

"From a legal standpoint, it's a nonissue," said New York lawyer Paul Talbert, a nonsmoker and father of three. "At least she's smoking outside."

Her previous public displays of bad parenting include:

* Being caught on camera driving with Sean Preston on her lap with no seat belts in February 2006.

* Getting a visit from child-welfare investigators in April of that year after Sean Preston fell from his high chair, bruising his head. He was taken to the hospital, and his doctors, as required by law, reported Spears.

* Nearly dropping Sean Preston while leaving a Midtown hotel - a close call captured in a front-page Post photo in May 2006.

david.li@nypost.com