



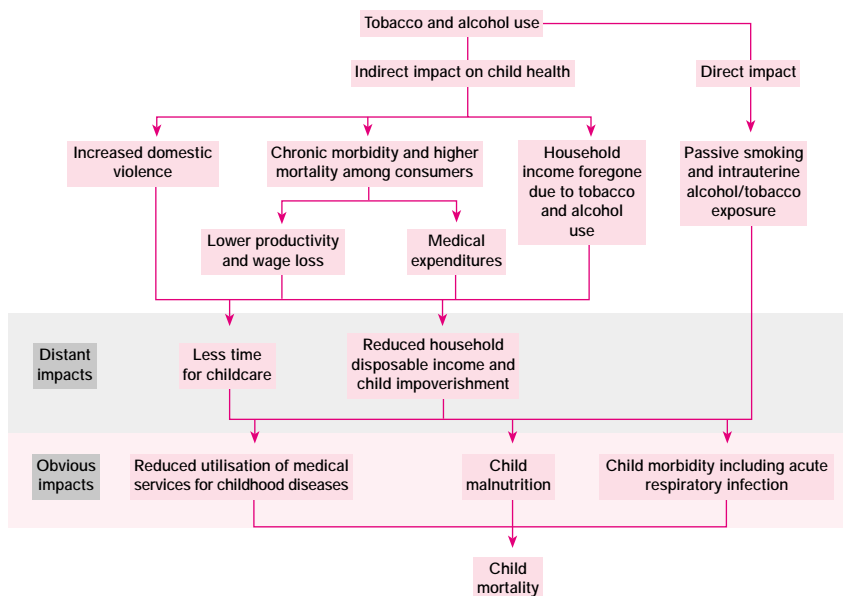
# Imperfect picture

## Families finance addiction at the cost of child health

■ Tobacco/alcohol use has one direct bearing on child health — passive smoking and intrauterine exposure; but there are two indirect implications — diversion of scant household income and less time for childcare

■ Though there is a strong association between the use of tobacco/alcohol and indirect health implications, the latter are often ignored by experts and policymakers

- The UN Millennium Development Goals aim to reduce child mortality. But they ignore a crucial relationship — household tobacco/alcohol consumption leads to low immunisation rate, malnutrition and respiratory infections among children. For the first time, a study establishes these linkages for India
- Three-fourths of Indian households (from all socio-economic strata) have at least one member consuming tobacco/alcohol. This, in turn, is responsible for seven per cent of the nation's infant mortality



■ Children suffer the most when family members smoke, chew tobacco as well as drink. Kids from homes where adults consume neither tobacco nor alcohol have the best health, followed by those from households where only alcohol is consumed

■ This is how kids from homes that don't use tobacco/alcohol use differ from those in homes where adults drink and smoke

- Immunisation — 52 per cent versus 30 per cent
- Acute respiratory infection (ARI) — 16 per cent versus 21 per cent
- Likelihood of care in case of ARI — 68 per cent versus 57 per cent
- Chance of severe stunted growth — 17 per cent versus 27 per cent
- Severely underweight — 13 per cent versus 22 per cent

■ With household drained in smoking and drinking, child health slips as a priority. It shows up in Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh and Tripura. These states have the highest number of ARI cases. Similarly, children in Nagaland, Bihar and Meghalaya suffer from lack of vaccination as family resources are wasted

