

Facts about Secondhand Smoke

“Smoke released from the burning end of a cigarette (side-stream smoke) and the smoke exhaled by a smoker (exhaled mainstream smoke.)”

Secondhand smoke is toxic

Secondhand smoke contains over 4,000 chemical compounds -- more than 60 of which are known to cause cancer in humans or animals. The following common chemicals are present in secondhand smoke:

Formaldehyde	–	Used to embalm dead bodies
Benzene	–	Used in gasoline
Hydrogen Cyanide	–	Used in chemical weapons
Cadmium	–	Used in making batteries
Arsenic	–	Used in pesticides

In a landmark 2006 report, The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Secondhand Smoke, the U.S. Surgeon General concluded that:

- There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Exposure to secondhand smoke at home or work increases a nonsmoker’s risk of developing heart disease by 25 to 30 percent and lung cancer by 20 to 30 percent.
- Even brief exposure to secondhand smoke has immediate negative effects on the cardiovascular system and interferes with the normal functioning of the heart, blood and vascular systems in ways that increase the risk of a heart attack.
- Breathing secondhand smoke is a known cause of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Children are also more likely to have lung problems, ear infections, and severe asthma from being around smoke.
- As few as 30 minutes of secondhand smoke exposure can impair coronary circulation in a nonsmoker.
- Eliminating smoking in indoor spaces is the only way to fully protect nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke. Separating smokers from nonsmokers, cleaning the air, and ventilating buildings cannot eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke.

Additional facts

- More than 49,000 deaths annually in the United States are the result of secondhand smoke-related illnesses, including lung cancer and heart disease.
- Many people suffer chronic and debilitating conditions caused by secondhand smoke-related diseases. These include emphysema, cancer, heart disease, stroke, chronic bronchitis, and asthma.
- Secondhand smoke causes at least 150,000 cases of pneumonia and bronchitis in children under 18 months of age every year.
- Children who are exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to develop ear infections and chronic respiratory illnesses.
- Infants and young children of parents who smoke are more likely to have lower respiratory tract infections, such as pneumonia and bronchitis.
- Nationwide, children exposed to secondhand smoke in the home experience more days of missed school every year than those not exposed.