

# SECOND-HAND SMOKE



TOBACCO PREVENTION & CONTROL PROGRAM

## What is second-hand smoke?

Second-hand smoke is made up of the smoke from a burning cigarette, cigar or pipe, and/or the smoke that is blown into the air by the person smoking. Two thirds of the smoke from a cigarette is not inhaled by the smoker, but enters the air around the smoker. It sometimes is called environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) or involuntary smoking. Second-hand smoke refers to what you see, smell and inhale when you're near someone who is actively smoking in a room or outdoors. Many of us breathe in second-hand smoke in public places, such as around doorways of buildings, on patios and walking on the street. When you are near someone who's smoking, it is like you and everyone else around them are smoking too.

Second-hand smoke is made up of two components:

- *Mainstream smoke* which is produced when a smoker inhales, and
- *Sidestream smoke* which is produced by the burning end/portion of a cigarette, cigar, or a pipe. It is the more dangerous of the two:
  - There is more of it in an enclosed space; and
  - It doesn't pass through a filter, so it contains more harmful chemicals.

## What are the health effects of second-hand smoke?

**No amount of second-hand smoke is safe.** Second-hand smoke has over 4,000 chemicals and more than 70 of them cause cancer. Every year, more than 800 Canadians who don't smoke die from second-hand smoke. In addition to an increased risk of developing cancer, exposure to second-hand smoke increases your risk for lung disease, heart disease, heart attacks and stroke. Over time, second-hand smoke can weaken a person's immune system. Second-hand smoke also makes you congested and causes you to cough. Second-hand smoke can make allergies or breathing problems (like asthma) worse. In less than 20 minutes of exposure, it can

- Irritate your skin, eyes, nose and throat,
- Give you a headache,
- Make you feel sick or dizzy, and
- Worsen your cold, chest infection or asthma.

Second-hand smoke affects everyone's health. Children, pregnant women, older people and people with heart or breathing problems should be especially careful to avoid second-hand smoke. Even pets are more likely to develop cancer and other health problems if they live in a home with a smoker.

## What is third-hand smoke?

When someone smokes, the toxic chemicals from the smoke gets into everything around them, including dust, carpet, furniture, curtains, clothing, and other objects. Even if fans are used to take away the sight and smell of smoke, the toxins remain in the room. The dangerous chemicals that stay around after the cigarette, cigar, or pipe, is out are referred to as third-hand smoke. The chemicals from third-hand smoke pollute the air and get into your lungs and body.

## OVER

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## How do I protect myself and the ones that I love from second-hand smoke?

There are many ways to protect yourself and your loved ones from second-hand smoke:

- **If you smoke, get help to quit.** It's never too late to quit. By quitting smoking, you will make yourself and the people that you love healthier. For help with quitting: <http://www.quitnow.ca/>
- **Never smoke around pregnant women, infants, children and teenagers.** Second-hand smoke affects babies before they born, increasing the risk of a lower birth weight and of dying due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome during infancy. Second-hand smoke is more dangerous for children because of their smaller lungs and faster breathing patterns. Children exposed to second-hand smoke are more likely to develop respiratory problems, asthma, and other health issues. Children and teens exposed to smoking are more likely to become smokers themselves.
- **Don't let anyone smoke in your home, your car, or your child's daycare.**
- **Keep yourself and your loved ones away from any place where people *usually* smoke – even if they aren't smoking while you're there.** Keep those you love away from places people usually smoke. This could include relatives' homes, cars, etc. The chemicals in tobacco smoke get into curtains, carpets, toys, furniture, walls, car seats, clothing, skin, and hair. This is known as "third-hand" smoke. It's not enough that the smoker doesn't light up when you or your loved ones are there. If you are in a room, house or car where people *usually* smoke, you will be exposed to the harmful chemicals in smoke.
- **Support efforts to ban smoking in public places.** Clean air bylaws in communities safeguard non-smokers from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke and promote healthy living for the enjoyment of all.
- **Support local efforts to ban smoking in multi-unit dwellings, such as apartments and condominiums.** Second-hand smoke can enter your home from an open window or door, and it can travel from one person's apartment to another through vents in the floor and cracks under the doorway. If you live in a multi-unit dwelling, you can ask the landlord or property owner or manager to:
  - Make building improvements that stop the spread of smoke, such as sealing cracks around vents and windows with foam insulation;
  - Create non-smoking floors, wings or entire buildings; and
  - Enforce local bylaws prohibiting smoking in common areas, such as hallways, stairwells, elevators, and laundry rooms.

### Remember that:

- ***No amount of second-hand smoke is safe.***
- ***Opening a window, running a fan or air purifier, or smoking near the chimney will not get rid of second-hand smoke.***