

# Effects of Secondhand Smoke

Don't smoke? Don't start. Smoking accounts for one of every five deaths in the United States. More people die from smoking-related illnesses than from the combined totals of deaths due to HIV infection, illegal drug use, alcohol use, motor vehicle injuries, suicides, and murders. Smoking affects every organ in the body. Smoking is a choice, so choose not to smoke.

## Hard Habit to Break

However, you may be inhaling secondhand smoke from someone else's hard habit to break. If you are in the vicinity of someone smoking a cigarette, the smoke from the burning end of the cigarette and the exhaled smoke from the smoker are released directly into the air you are breathing. If that person is smoking in an enclosed space and you are in there with the smoker, you ARE smoking the same cigarette—secondhand. Research indicates that many cancer causing toxins are more concentrated in secondhand smoke than in the primary smoke being inhaled by the smoker. Moreover, the smoke (and all its harmful components) can hang around for hours or days in upholstery, carpets, clothing, and other absorbable materials. Over the years, its yellow, gooey residue can build up on furniture, walls, ceilings—everything in the smoker's environment.

## The Impact of Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

Secondhand smoke affects 126 million nonsmoking Americans because it lingers in homes, vehicles, workplaces, and public places. Almost 60% of all American children aged three to eleven years are exposed to secondhand smoke. Although exposure to secondhand smoke fell by 70% from 1988-91 to 2001-02, 43% of U.S. nonsmokers still have detectable levels of cotinine in their body fluids. Cotinine is a chemical biomarker of secondhand smoke and can be detected in the saliva, urine, and blood of nonsmokers. Somewhere, these nonsmokers have inhaled someone else's cigarette smoke.

If you are being exposed to secondhand smoke, share the following information with that smoker and volunteer to help them quit. The South Dakota QuitLine can also help with free professional advice, workbooks and materials, nicotine withdrawal medication, coaching assistance, and referrals. Call 1-866-SD Quits (1-866-737-8487).

- Secondhand smoke contains over 250 chemicals known to be toxic or cancer-causing. These include formaldehyde, benzene, vinyl chloride, arsenic, ammonia, and hydrogen cyanide.
- The Surgeon General states there is no risk-free level of secondhand smoke exposure. Even brief exposure can be harmful.
- 25% of the nation's children live in households with at least one smoker. Exposed children ages three to eleven generally have cotinine levels more than twice as high as nonsmoking adults.
- Exposure to secondhand smoke is deadliest for unborn children, infants, and small children. Their small, developing bodies make them more vulnerable to the toxins.
- Continued exposure to tobacco smoke is linked to sudden infant death syndrome.



## Effects of Secondhand Smoke, cont.

### The Impact of Exposure to Secondhand Smoke, cont,



- Nonsmoking pregnant women exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to have lower birth weight babies, which increases the risk for many health problems.
- Infants born to smoking mothers are more likely to have lower birth weights and developmental delays, including weakened lungs.
- Children exposed to secondhand cigarette smoke are more susceptible to asthma, respiratory illnesses, and ear infections. Lung development is often delayed.
- Exposure to secondhand smoke causes heart disease and lung cancer in non-smoking adults. These nonsmokers are exposed to a 25-30% increase in heart disease risk and a 20-30% increased in lung cancer risk.
- Nonsmoking adults exposed to cigarette smoke are more likely to contract respiratory diseases.

Okay, so you've gotten your loved one to quit smoking—or at least take it outside. Are you safe now? Maybe not. Approximately 30% of indoor employees in this country are exposed to secondhand smoke in the workplace. Although public places such as restaurants and hotels are moving toward smoke free environmental policies, keep in mind the following from the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE). This society has concluded that current ventilation technology cannot be relied on to control health risks from exposure to secondhand smoke. The routine operation of most air circulating systems actually distributes secondhand smoke through a building.

**For more information on secondhand smoke please visit:**

<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/secondhandsmoke/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco>

<http://www.healthysd.gov/QuitTobacco.html>