



Secondhand Smoke Fact Sheet

What is in it?

Tobacco smoke contains a complex mixture of more than 4,000 chemicals.¹

Tobacco smoke contains at least 250 toxic or cancer causing chemicals.² Arsenic, benzene, ammonia, formaldehyde, and hydrogen cyanide are just five examples.¹ Eleven of the chemicals are known to cause cancer in humans.³

Is it safe to breathe secondhand smoke?

The scientific evidence indicates that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke.⁴

What is the human cost?

About 3,000 nonsmokers die every year in America from lung cancer caused by exposure to secondhand smoke.⁵

Exposure to secondhand smoke causes about 46,000 deaths from heart disease every year in America.⁶

What is the risk to my health?

Secondhand smoke affects your heart and blood vessels in many different ways.⁷ Studies have shown that just 30 minutes of exposure to secondhand smoke can cause significant changes in the function of the heart and blood vessels of nonsmokers.⁸ Nonsmokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke at home or at work increase their risk of developing **heart disease** by 25 - 30%.⁴

Nonsmokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke at home or at work increase their risk of developing **lung cancer** by 20 - 30%.⁴

What are my rights?

"The right of smokers to smoke ends where their behavior affects the health and well-being of others..."⁹

At a restaurant, does sitting in the no smoking section protect me?

A study of 17 sites showed that there was about 50% as much smoke in the "no smoking section" as there was in the "smoking section".¹⁰

Can ventilation or air cleaning systems make the air safe to breathe?

"At present, the only means of effectively eliminating health risk associated with indoor exposure is to ban smoking activity."¹¹

What is the best way to protect people at work?

Eliminating smoking in indoor spaces fully protects nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke.⁴

Sources

¹ National Cancer Institute. *Health Effects of Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke: The Report of the California Environmental Protection Agency*. Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph No. 10 Bethesda, MD. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health. 1999.

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³ National Cancer Institute. *Risks Associated with Smoking Cigarettes with Low Machine-Measured Yields of Tar and Nicotine*. Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph No. 13 Bethesda, MD. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health. 2001.

⁴ U.S Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, Georgia: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006.

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Annual Smoking-Attributable Mortality, Years of Potential Life Lost, and Productivity Losses—United States 1997-2001." *MMWR*. 2005; 54: 625-628

⁶ California Environmental Protection Agency. *Proposed Identification of Environmental Tobacco Smoke as a Toxic Air contaminant. Part B: Health Effects*. Sacramento, CA, California Environmental Protection Agency, 2005

⁷ Barnoya, J and S Glantz. "Cardiovascular Effects of Secondhand Smoke Nearly as Large as Smoking." *Circulation*. 2005; 111:2648-2698.

⁸ Otsuka, R et al, "Acute Effects of Passive Smoking on the Coronary Circulation in Healthy Young Adults." *Journal of the American Medical Association*. 2001; 286:436-441.

⁹ U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health. 1986.

¹⁰ Cains, T et al. "Designated "No Smoking" Areas Provide from Partial to No Protection from Environmental Tobacco Smoke." *Tobacco Control*. 2004;13:17-22.

¹¹ Samet, J et al. "ASHRAE position document on environmental tobacco smoke." American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE). 2005. (Available online at www.ashrae.org/content/ASHRAE/ASHRAE/ArticleAltFormat/20058211239_347.pdf)

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