

Reducing the Health Risks of Secondhand Smoke¹

The American Lung Association²

WHAT IS SECONDHAND SMOKE?

Secondhand smoke is a mixture of the smoke exhaled by smokers and the smoke that comes from the burning end of a cigarette, cigar, or pipe. You also may have heard it called environmental tobacco smoke (ETS), passive, or involuntary smoke. Secondhand smoke contains more than 4,000 substances. Many of them are dangerous poisons and can cause cancer. Anyone exposed to secondhand smoke inhales these substances.

Lung disease, including lung cancer, is the third leading cause of death in the U.S. Secondhand smoke:

- Can cause lung cancer in nonsmokers; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency lists it as a Group A carcinogen, a rating used only for substances (i.e., asbestos) proven to cause cancer in humans .
- Will cause an estimated 3,000 lung cancer deaths this year.
- Can be a direct health threat to people who already have heart and lung diseases.
- Increases the risk of serious lung disease during the first two years of a child's life.

TOBACCO SMOKE IN YOUR HOME IS A THREAT TO EVERYONE

- Nonsmokers who live with smokers are more likely to develop lung cancer than other nonsmoking adults.
- If you have asthma, secondhand smoke can make your breathing problems worse.

- Young children are especially sensitive to secondhand smoke. A baby who lives in a home where one or both parents smoke is more likely to have lung disease serious enough to need treatment in a hospital during the first two years of life.
- Children exposed to secondhand smoke in the home are more likely to cough and wheeze and to have middle ear problems.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR FAMILY AT HOME

- Don't allow smoking in your home. Ask smokers to smoke outside or, if you must, limit smoking to a separately ventilated room.
- Be supportive. Help the smoker to quit.
- Place "Thank You for Not Smoking" signs around the house.
- Do not allow babysitters or others who work in your home to smoke in the house.

WHAT IF PEOPLE SMOKE WHERE YOU WORK?

NIOSH (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health) has determined that secondhand smoke may cause lung cancer in exposed workers.

- On-the-job exposure to secondhand smoke can be four times higher than in the home.
- Secondhand smoke can irritate your eyes, nose and throat.

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2. The American Lung Association, National Office, 1740 Broadway, New York, NY, 10019-4374.

- Some workers are already exposed to substances that can cause lung disease. Secondhand smoke in the workplace can only increase the danger.
- To protect nonsmokers from secondhand smoke, the workplace must be totally smoke free or smoking must be limited to a separate, enclosed area with its own ventilation system. As of 1991, about 4 out of 10 American companies with smoking policies were smoke free.

A SPECIAL MESSAGE FOR SMOKERS

Smoke free worksites can be tough on smokers. Here are some tips for coping:

- In smoke free areas, do something to take your mind off smoking. Take a walk or stretch. Have a glass of water or a light snack.
- If you must smoke, make sure you are not in a "No Smoking" area before you light up and don't let cigarettes smolder in ashtrays.
- Try to quit smoking. See if your company offers any programs to help you quit or contact one of the organizations listed on the back of this booklet.

WORKING FOR CLEAN AIR IN THE WORKPLACE

- First, find out your company's smoking policy. Ask what steps have been taken to protect the nonsmoker from second hand smoke (NIOSH states that workers should be protected from exposure to secondhand smoke.
- If you're not satisfied with the policy, talk to your employer. Contact resources listed in this document for more information.
- Be a leader in helping to draw up a fair plan for a smoke free workplace. Ask coworkers what they want and would be willing to do.
- If your workplace is not smoke free, use "Thank You for Not Smoking" signs in your work area.
- Know the law. If you work in a school, hospital or other public facility, you already may be covered by a law prohibiting smoking. Some laws also require privately owned companies to have a smoking policy. In most states, employers must provide reasonably safe workplaces. This law may prove

more powerful now that secondhand smoke is known to cause cancer.

WHAT ABOUT EXPOSURE TO SECONDHAND SMOKE IN PUBLIC PLACES

More people are becoming worried about secondhand smoke and less willing to be exposed to it. About 82% of all adult Americans think that smokers should not smoke around nonsmokers.

To avoid or reduce second-hand smoke in public places:

- Take advantage of laws designed to protect you. By law, all airline flights six hours or less within the U.S. and all interstate bus travel are smoke free. State and local laws regulating smoking in public places vary greatly. Contact your local Lung Association, listed in the white pages of the phone book, to find out about the laws in your area.
- Push for stronger laws. Write letters to newspapers and to your public officials urging that public places be smoke free.
- Make sure your child's day care, preschool, school and after-school programs are smoke free.
- Go to restaurants that are smoke free or have smoke free sections.
- Let smokers know that you do mind if they smoke around you.

ORGANIZATIONS TO CONTACT

The American Lung Association
National Office
1740 Broadway
New York, NY 10019-4374
(212) 315-8700

Or contact your local Lung Association listed in the white pages of the phone book.

Office on Smoking and Health
Centers for Disease Control
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and
Health Promotion
Mail Stop K-50
4770 Buford Highway
Atlanta, GA 30341

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Indoor Air Quality Information Clearinghouse
1-800-438-4318

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
(NIOSH)
4676 Columbia Parkway
Cincinnati, Ohio 45226-1998
1-800-35-NIOSH

National Cancer Institute
Building 31, Room 10A24
Bethesda, MD 20892
1-800-4-CANCER

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
Information Center
4733 Bethesda Avenue, Suite 530
Bethesda, MD 20814