



SECOND-HAND SMOKE

The Issue

Breathing in second-hand smoke causes at least 800 deaths in Canadian non-smokers from lung cancer and heart disease every year. The best way to protect your family from the health effects of second-hand smoke is to make your home and car 100% smoke-free.

Background

Second-hand smoke is what smokers exhale and what rises from an idle burning cigarette, cigar or pipe. When you see second-hand smoke in the air, what may not be so obvious is that there are 4,000 chemicals in the smoke.

More than 50 of these chemicals are carcinogens. This means they cause cancer. The chemicals also contribute directly to other diseases, such as asthma, heart disease and emphysema.

When someone smokes in your home, second-hand smoke spreads from one room to another, even if the door to the smoking area is closed. In addition, potentially toxic chemicals in second-hand smoke can cling to rugs, curtains, clothes, food and other materials, and can usually remain in a room or car long after someone has smoked there.

You may think you can clear the smoke from a room or your car by opening a window or turning on a fan, but this is not the case. Studies have shown there is no level of ventilation that will eliminate the harmful effects of second-hand smoke. Even air filters (air purifiers) are not enough. Second-hand smoke is composed of both particles and gases. Most air filters are designed to remove fine smoke particles from the air, but they do not remove the gases that can cause diseases.

The Health Effects of Second-hand Smoke

Second-hand smoke hurts everyone, but is particularly dangerous to babies and children because their lungs are still developing. Because their lungs are smaller, babies and children breathe more quickly and take in more harmful chemicals for their size than adults do. In addition, their immune systems are less developed and cannot protect them as much from tobacco smoke.

The health effects from exposure to second-hand smoke include the following:

For unborn babies

- Nicotine in the blood of a pregnant woman exposed to second-hand smoke can decrease blood flow to the baby and can affect the baby's heart, lungs, digestive system and central nervous system.
- Carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke can affect the baby's growth and may lead to low birth weight.

For babies and children

- Babies who breathe in second-hand smoke have a higher risk of dying from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) or crib death.
- Babies and children exposed to second-hand smoke have more frequent lower respiratory tract problems, such as coughs, pneumonia, bronchitis and croup.
- Children exposed to second-hand smoke are more likely to develop asthma. They will also suffer more from it than asthmatic children of non-smokers.



- Second-hand smoke increases the number of ear infections in children.
- Second-hand smoke may also harm a child's ability to think things through (cognition). Recently, studies have shown that children exposed to tobacco smoke scored lower on tests than children who were not exposed.

For adults

Non-smoking adults exposed to second-hand smoke may have an increased risk of lung cancer and respiratory problems. They may also have an increased risk of heart disease, because second-hand smoke does the following:

- fosters the formation of blood clots that can lead to heart attacks and stroke;
- raises your heart rate and damages your heart muscle; and
- lowers the level of protective HDL-cholesterol in your blood.

Minimizing Your Risk

If you choose to smoke or if you live with a smoker, protect your family from the health effects of second-hand smoke by keeping your home and car 100% smoke-free. Start by getting a copy of *Make Your Home and Car Smoke-Free: A Guide to Protecting Your Family From Second-hand Smoke*. (See the *Need More Info?* section below for more on this.) The Guide offers many helpful tips, including the following:

In your home

- Set up an area outside for smokers to use.
- Post a "smoke-free" magnet on your fridge to let people know that you do not allow smoking.

- Remove all ashtrays from inside your home.
- Ask your children's caregivers not to smoke around your children.
- Ask anyone who is doing work in your home not to smoke indoors.

The Guide also suggests additional steps you can take if you live in a multi-unit building (apartment, etc.), such as using foam or insulation to fill, seal and insulate cracks and gaps around pipes and vents.

In your car

- Let all passengers know that your car is smoke-free.
- Clean out the ashtray and fill it with sugar-free candies or potpourri.
- Wash your car and give it a good cleaning, including a thorough vacuuming, if someone has smoked within.
- Post a "smoke-free" decal in your car to let everyone know you do not allow smoking.

If you are a smoker, you may find it easier to quit once your home and car become smoke-free. See the *Need More Info?* section below for resources that can help you become a non-smoker.

Health Canada's Role

The primary mission of the Federal Tobacco Control Strategy (FTCS) is to reduce tobacco-related disease and death among Canadians. It recognizes that the key to success is comprehensive, integrated and sustained action, carried out in collaboration with all partners and directed at Canadians of all ages.

As part of this strategy, Health Canada designs and carries out public awareness campaigns on

such issues as protecting children and families from the dangers of second-hand smoke.

Need More Info?

Contact:
Health Canada
Tobacco Control Programme
Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9
Or visit: www.gosmokefree.ca

For your copy of *Make Your Home and Car Smoke-Free: A Guide to Protecting Your Family from Second-hand Smoke*, see:
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/pubs/tobac-tabac/second-guide/index_e.html

For a copy of *On the Road to Quitting - Guide to Becoming a Non-Smoker*, see:
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/pubs/tobac-tabac/orq-svr/index_e.html

You can also get copies of the Guides by calling 1-800-O-CANADA (1-800-622-6232). This number is toll-free in Canada.

For additional articles on health and safety issues go to the *It's Your Health* website at:
www.healthcanada.gc.ca/iyh

You can also call toll-free at 1-866-225-0709 or TTY at 1-800-267-1245*