

Information from: Breathe Easy Coalition of Maine

https://smokingcessationleadership.ucsf.edu/sites/smokingcessationleadership.ucsf.edu/files/thirdhand_smoke_flyer_maine.pdf

What is thirdhand smoke, and why is it a concern?

Thirdhand smoke is generally considered to be residual nicotine and other chemicals left on a variety of indoor surfaces by tobacco smoke. This residue is thought to react with common indoor pollutants to create a toxic mix. This toxic mix of thirdhand smoke contains cancer-causing substances, posing a potential health hazard to nonsmokers who are exposed to it, especially children.

Studies show that thirdhand smoke clings to hair, skin, clothes, furniture, drapes, walls, bedding, carpets, dust, vehicles and other surfaces, even long after smoking has stopped. Infants, children and nonsmoking adults may be at risk of tobacco-related health problems when they inhale, ingest or touch substances containing thirdhand smoke. Thirdhand smoke is a relatively new concept, and researchers are still studying its possible dangers.

Thirdhand smoke residue builds up on surfaces over time and resists normal cleaning. Thirdhand smoke can't be eliminated by airing out rooms, opening windows, using fans or air conditioners, or confining smoking to only certain areas of a home. In contrast, secondhand smoke is the smoke and other airborne products that come from being close to burning tobacco products, such as cigarettes.

The only way to protect nonsmokers from thirdhand smoke is to create a smoke-free environment, whether that's your private home or vehicle, or in public places, such as hotels and restaurants

What are the dangers associated with thirdhand smoke exposure?

- Overall, those exposed to thirdhand smoke have higher risk of heart disease, stroke and other smoking related diseases.
- Thirdhand smoke is a health hazard for infants and children, who are particularly vulnerable because they are often held close to hair, clothes and skin. They can ingest tobacco residue by putting their hands in their mouths after touching contaminated surfaces.
 - ✓ Infants exposed are more likely to die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
 - ✓ Infants and children have an increased risk of asthma. For those with asthma, symptoms can worsen.
- Once on surfaces, tobacco residue can easily be reintroduced into the air, resulting in particles that over time could contribute to cancer and breathing problems, like asthma.

How to protect yourself?

- Thirdhand smoke builds up over time and resists normal household cleaning. It can't be eliminated by airing out rooms, opening windows or using fans or air conditioners, or confining smoking to certain indoor areas.
- Make it a rule that you do not allow smoking in your home, car, or where children play.¹
- Try to keep your children out of the homes of people who smoke. Meet at smoke-free place instead.¹
- The best thing you can do for your health and the health of those around you is to get help quitting smoking.¹
- Protect family, friends and coworkers by smoking outside, washing hands and hair, and by changing clothes before coming in contact with nonsmokers, especially infants and children.

