



Secondhand Smoke Fact Sheet

Navigation Services



Need more information? Contact our Navigation Services Team at 303-432-5130 or navigation@jcmh.org

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

Secondhand smoke occurs from burning products such as cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and e-cigarettes. It includes smoke that has been exhaled or breathed out by the person smoking. Secondhand smoke from tobacco has the same physical and chemical make-up as cannabis smoke, minus the active ingredients. Recent research indicates that exposure to secondhand smoke from marijuana may have the same harmful effects to the cardiovascular system as tobacco smoke. Similarly, e-cigarette smoke has many of the same harmful substances.

What are the dangers associated with secondhand smoke exposure?

There is no risk-free level of secondhand smoke exposure; even brief exposure can be harmful to the health. Secondhand smoke has more than 7,000 chemicals, including hundreds that are toxic and about 70 that can cause cancer.

- In children, secondhand smoke causes ear infections, more frequent and severe asthma attacks, respiratory symptoms (e.g., coughing, sneezing, shortness of breath), respiratory infections (i.e., bronchitis, pneumonia), and a greater risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).
- In adults who have never smoked, secondhand smoke can cause cardiovascular disease, including increased risk of heart attack and heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer.

How do you protect yourself and your family?

While quitting smoking is the only way to completely protect yourself and your family from secondhand smoke in the home and car, stepping outside every time you smoke can help.

Separating smokers from nonsmokers within the same air space, cleaning the air, opening windows, and ventilating buildings does not eliminate secondhand smoke exposure. There is no safe distance between smokers and non-smokers since the area shares the same air. Many of the dangerous chemicals found in smoke have no odor, so it's hard to tell if they are in the air. Opening a window or turning on a fan doesn't completely remove the poisonous chemicals in secondhand smoke from the air. In fact, not even the most expensive air cleaning systems are able to clear the air of all poisons in secondhand smoke.

Information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at:
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