SECONDHAND SMOKING

"The evidence is now indisputable that secondhand smoke is an alarming public health hazard, responsible for thousands of premature deaths among nonsmokers each year."

—RICHARD CARMONA, U.S. SURGEON GENERAL, 2006

Secondhand smoke, also known as passive smoking or environmental tobacco smoke, is a mixture of sidestream smoke from the burning tip of the cigarette and mainstream smoke exhaled by the smoker. More toxic per unit of tobacco than mainstream smoke, sidestream smoke is the major component of secondhand smoke. At least fifty carcinogenic chemicals have been identified in secondhand smoke. Nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke experience immediate cardiovascular and respiratory damage. Long-term effects of secondhand smoke exposure include lung cancer and coronary heart disease. Expectant mothers, fetuses, and infants exposed to secondhand smoke face higher risk of adverse health consequences.

Smoke-free policies provide protection against exposure to secondhand smoke. Today, nearly half the world’s children are exposed to an unacceptable health hazard: tobacco smoke. Breathing even a little secondhand smoke can be harmful to your health.

If children don’t like to be in a smoky room, they’ll learn, 1 ft. for infant, 3 ft. for toddler, and they will learn to crawl and play safe.”

—Charles M. Vestler, R.J. Reynolds chairman, April 18, 1996

Percent of youth who live in homes where others smoke in their presence

Harm caused by secondhand smoke

Sufficient Evidence
Stroke
Nasal sinus cancer
Breast cancer
Atherosclerosis
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, chronic respiratory symptoms, asthma, impaired lung function
Preterm delivery

Suggestive Evidence
Coronary artery disease
Lung cancer
Reproductive effects in women

No data

80% and above
60%–79.9%
40%–59.9%
Below 20%
Regional or city data only
More than 90% of youth exposed to secondhand smoke

Nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke at home or at work increase their heart disease risk by 25 to 30 percent and lung cancer risk by at least 20 to 30 percent.

AFTER THE implementation of comprehensive smoke-free laws in New Zealand, bar patrons are exposed to 90 percent less secondhand smoke.

SMOKING IN THE home raises by 5 percent a child’s probability of visiting a hospital emergency room for a respiratory illness.

THERE IS NO risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Breathing even a little secondhand smoke can be harmful to your health.

Number of deaths attributable to secondhand smoke in the 25 countries of the European Union

Major causes, 2002

Total 79,449

Lung cancer 13,241

Ischemic heart disease 32,342

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease 5,275

Stroke 28,591

Preterm delivery

Major causes, 2002

SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome)
Lower respiratory illness, including pneumonia
Impaired lung function
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, chronic respiratory symptoms, asthma, impaired lung function
SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome)
Lung cancer
Reproductive effects in women

Preterm delivery

Children
Sufficient Evidence
Middle ear disease
Respiratory symptoms, e.g., cough, wheeze
Impaired lung function
SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome)
Lower respiratory illness, including pneumonia
Low birth weight

Suggestive Evidence
Brain tumors
Lymphoma
Leukemia

Suggestive Evidence
Stroke
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Breast cancer
Atherosclerosis
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