

[What is Secondhand Smoke?]

Secondhand smoke, also called environmental tobacco smoke, is the mixture of gases and fine particles from burning tobacco products. It also includes the smoke that has been exhaled by the person smoking.

Breathing in secondhand smoke can lead to disease and premature death in those who do not smoke. Exposure to secondhand smoke increases the risk of developing heart and lung disease. Secondhand smoke can trigger respiratory symptoms and cause asthma exacerbations as there is no safe level of exposure.

Disparities in exposure persist among certain population groups. Children ages 3-11 years, people living in poverty, renters, and African Americans are exposed to higher levels of secondhand smoke than other populations. Children who are continuously exposed to smoke may develop asthma or experience asthma symptoms, and are also at increased risk for ear infections, lower respiratory infection, and overall decreased lung function. Infants exposed to secondhand smoke are at risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

Separating smokers from non-smokers, opening windows, or using air filters does not prevent people from breathing secondhand smoke. Making your home or building smoke-free can significantly reduce exposure to secondhand smoke and is one of the most important steps you can take for the health of your children and family. Public places such as restaurants, bars, casinos, and vehicles also expose people to the negative health effects of secondhand smoke. Smoke-free air laws have been shown to significantly reduce exposure to secondhand smoke. Twenty seven states (including Illinois) and over 1,000 cities and counties have enacted smoke-free air laws.

By the Numbers:

1,000,000

World wide, over **one million** people die each year from secondhand smoke

7,000

There are over **seven thousand** chemicals in secondhand smoke

70

Seventy of those chemicals are carcinogenic

400

Secondhand smoke is responsible for **400** SIDS deaths each year

35%

35% of children live with a smoker

58,000,000

58 million non-smokers are exposed to secondhand smoke in public places in the US