



Secondhand Smoke: The Health Consequences

What is secondhand smoke?

- Secondhand smoke contains more than 43 known carcinogens and 200 known poisons, including ammonia, formaldehyde, hydrogen cyanide, arsenic, carbon monoxide and benzene.¹
- Secondhand smoke is classified as a Group A carcinogen. There is no safe level of exposure to Group A toxins.²

Health Risks

- Cancer: Lung cancer caused by exposure to secondhand smoke is responsible for an estimated 3,000 deaths per year among US non-smokers. Secondhand smoke is also a confirmed cause of nasal sinus cancer in non-smokers.¹
- Heart disease: Exposure to secondhand smoke causes between 35,000 and 62,000 coronary heart disease deaths each year in the U.S.¹ Non-smoking women regularly exposed to secondhand smoke have a 91% higher risk of death from heart attack; the risk is 58% higher if women are occasionally exposed to secondhand smoke.³
- Stroke: Non-smokers regularly exposed to secondhand smoke have an 82% greater chance of suffering a stroke.⁴
- Secondhand smoke and children: Every year, secondhand smoke is responsible for up to 26,000 new asthma cases in children and up to 300,000 cases of bronchitis and pneumonia in toddlers – 7,500 to 15,000 of which will require hospitalization.
 - Because their lungs are not fully developed, young children are particularly susceptible to the damaging effects of secondhand smoke.²
 - Secondhand smoke has been repeatedly associated with sudden infant death syndrome. This risk increases with the number of cigarettes smoked daily near and around infants.⁵
- The CDC is warning people at risk of heart disease to avoid all buildings and gathering places that allow indoor smoking.⁶

¹ National Cancer Institute, 1999.

² US Environmental Protection Agency, 1992.

³ American Heart Association Journal, 1997.

⁴ Tobacco Control, 1999.

⁵ US Department of Health and Human Services, 2001.

⁶ CDC, 2004.