

How can you protect yourself and your loved ones from the dangers of secondhand smoke?

Unfortunately, there is no safe level of secondhand smoke. The only way to protect yourself is to avoid it as much as possible. Ban smoking in and around your home and make sure that family members, friends and visitors follow the policy. When out in public, choose to spend time at smoke-free venues and try to stay away from those who are smoking.



If you smoke, do so outdoors and in open areas away from others, especially children and other high-risk people. Also, try quitting! There are many local resources that can offer you support. Contact your local Breathe California office at 1-877-3-BREATHE to learn about services in your area or to receive help on secondhand smoke issues.

FAST FACT

Secondhand smoke causes about 3,400 lung cancer deaths and tens of thousands of heart disease deaths in the United States each year.

Source: California Environmental Protection Agency



1-877-3-BREATHE
www.breathecalifornia.org

Breathe California of the Bay Area
1469 Park Avenue
San Jose, CA 95126
(408) 998-5865
www.lungsrus.org

Breathe California Central Coast
550 Camino El Estero, Suite 100
Monterey, CA 93940
(831) 373-7306
www.breathcentral.org

Breathe California
Golden Gate Public Health Partnership
2171 Junipero Serra Blvd, Suite 720
Daly City, CA 94014
(650) 994-5868
www.ggbreathe.org

Breathe California of Los Angeles County
5858 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 300
Los Angeles, CA 90036
(323) 935-8050
www.breathela.org

Breathe California
of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails
909 12th St, Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 444-5900
www.sacbreathe.org

Secondhand Smoke



What is secondhand smoke?

Secondhand smoke, also known as Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS) or passive smoke, is a dangerous air pollutant that can harm your health.



Secondhand smoke is made up of more than 4000 chemicals that are released from the end of a burning cigarette and exhaled by a smoker. It contains 40 known cancer-causing agents as well as many other harmful chemicals, including: **carbon monoxide**, a poisonous gas that destroys red blood cells, and **tar**, which sticks on and damages lung tissue. In 2006, the California Air Resources Board classified secondhand smoke as a toxic air contaminant.

People are at risk of breathing in secondhand smoke anywhere there are smokers. It can also travel about 20 feet in every direction and may stay around for hours.

FAST FACT

Individuals exposed to secondhand smoke have a 20 to 30 percent higher chance of developing lung cancer and heart disease.

Source: United States Surgeon General

How does secondhand smoke affect your health?

Secondhand smoke can affect your health even if you are only exposed to it for a short amount of time - sometimes in a matter of minutes! When you breathe in secondhand smoke, chemicals irritate the airways and have an immediate effect on the entire body. This can lead to a number of serious and deadly health problems.

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People exposed to secondhand smoke may suffer from coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, asthma attacks and even heart attacks. Secondhand smoke can also hurt the eyes, nose and throat as well as cause headaches and dizziness.

Over time, being around secondhand smoke can be even more dangerous. It can cause chronic lung problems, lung cancer and heart disease in non-smoking adults as well as lung and ear infections, asthma and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) in children. Secondhand smoke is responsible for more than 50,000 deaths in the United States each year.



Who faces a high-risk from secondhand smoke?

While secondhand smoke is harmful to everybody, it is even more dangerous to the following high-risk individuals:

- Babies and children, whose lungs are still growing and can be easily damaged.
- Heart and lung disease patients, who may suffer even more problems because of their condition.
- Pregnant women, who have a risk of miscarriage, premature birth and infant death.
- Seniors, who often have weaker immune systems.