

Secondhand smoke is a known cause of cancer in humans.

Tobacco **FACT** Sheet

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Secondhand Smoke

Secondhand smoke, also known as environmental tobacco smoke (ETS), is the smoke given off by the burning end of a cigarette, pipe, or cigar and the smoke exhaled from smokers. It can cause illness or worsen existing health problems including cancer, respiratory infections, and asthma.

Secondhand smoke has been classified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a known cause of cancer in humans (Group A carcinogen). There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

If you are a smoker:

- Smoke outside. Do not permit others to smoke in your house, apartment or car.
- Wear “smoking clothes” that you take off when you come inside after smoking. It is also a good idea to leave your jacket outside if possible.
- If you are with children, avoid places that allow smoking.

What’s actually in the smoke?

Tobacco smoke contains over 4000 chemicals, more than 60 of which are known or suspected to cause cancer¹. The American Cancer Society also states that secondhand smoke is responsible for the following:

- An estimated 46,000 deaths from heart disease in non-smokers who live with smokers.
- About 3,400 lung cancer deaths in non-smoking adults.
- Other breathing problems in non-smokers, including coughing, mucus, chest discomfort, and reduced lung function.
- 50,000 to 300,000 lung infections (such as pneumonia and bronchitis) in children younger than 18 months of age, which results in 7,500 to 15,000 hospitalizations annually.
- Increases the number and severity of asthma attacks in about 200,000 to 1 million children who have asthma.
- More than 750,000 middle ear infections in children.
- Pregnant women exposed to secondhand smoke are also at increased risk of having low birth-weight babies.

Five tips for quitting

Studies have shown that these five steps will help you quit and quit for good. You have the best chances of quitting if you use these five steps to develop and maintain your own quit plan.

1. Get ready.
2. Get support.
3. Learn new skills and behaviors.
4. Get medication and use it correctly.
5. Be prepared for difficult situations.

Talk to your health care provider, they can help. If you do not have insurance or just need to talk call the Washington Tobacco Quitline.

Tobacco Quit Line

1-800-QUIT-NOW

toll-free

1-800-784-8669

QUITLINE.COM

¹ American Cancer Society, <http://www.cancer.org/Cancer/CancerCauses/TobaccoCancer/secondhand-smoke>. Retrieved November 1, 2010.

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