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Live Free of Second-hand Smoke

Tips for home, car, work and outdoors



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Live Free of Second-hand Smoke

Tips for home, car, work and outdoors

This brochure gives you the facts about how second-hand smoke affects you at home, in a car, at work and outdoors. You'll find tips to help you avoid or stop second-hand smoke from getting into your breathing space and suggestions about how to ask someone not to smoke close by.

What is second-hand smoke?

Second-hand smoke is what smokers breathe out and into the air. It's also the smoke that comes from a burning cigarette, cigar or pipe. Second-hand smoke has the same chemicals in it as the tobacco smoke breathed in by a smoker. So if you're sitting beside someone who's smoking, you and everyone else around you are smoking too.

No amount of second-hand smoke is safe

- Hundreds of the chemicals in second-hand smoke are toxic and more than 70 of them can cause cancer.
- Being around second-hand smoke puts you at risk of developing lung cancer and other lung diseases. You're also at higher risk for heart attacks and stroke.
- It can bother your skin, eyes, nose and throat.
- If you have allergies or breathing problems (like asthma), second-hand smoke can make them much worse.

What is third-hand smoke?

When a person smokes, the toxic chemicals from second-hand smoke travel through the air and land on carpets, furniture, curtains and other surfaces. They even land on any dust that's in the room. These chemicals stay around after the cigarette is out – this is called third-hand smoke.

People who smoke have third-hand smoke on their clothing, skin and hair – that's why they smell like smoke even when they're not smoking. And it's why you smell like smoke after you've been around smokers.

If someone is smoking near you

It's not easy to ask someone who is smoking near you not to smoke. Let smokers know that you're not against them smoking, but you are asking them not to smoke near you. Don't argue with the smoker. Be firm but polite. How you say it is as important as what you say. And be aware that some people will respond well, while others will not.

When to ask someone not to smoke

At home, talk to a smoker when it feels right. You may need to explain that second-hand smoke spreads through your home, even if the doors are closed. And opening a window or turning on a fan doesn't get rid of second-hand smoke.

In a public place with someone you don't know, it may not be so easy. It may be safer to just move away from the smoker. If you're in a no-smoking area then ask for help from someone in charge.

I need to breathe fresh air.
It keeps me healthy.



Babies who were around second-hand smoke before they were born can weigh less than normal at birth. This is because chemicals in second-hand smoke affect how they grow and develop. And if a new mother smokes, some chemicals such as nicotine go directly from her breast milk to her baby. Babies who breathe in second-hand smoke are more likely to get sick than other babies and to die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

Babies crawl on the floor and often put things in their mouths. This means they take in more dust than adults and in turn more third-hand smoke.

Children's bodies are still growing, and they breathe faster than adults. This means they breathe in more harmful chemicals if they're around second-hand smoke. Plus, their immune systems are less developed and can't protect them as well.

Second-hand smoke hurts babies and children

Babies and children of parents who smoke are more likely to:

- have breathing problems like wheezing and coughs
- develop ear infections
- have chronic lung disease when they're older
- develop asthma, and their asthma will be worse

Second-hand smoke may even harm the ability of your children and teens to read and do math. Children who are around second-hand smoke tend to do less well in school than children in smoke-free homes.

> **TIPS** to be smoke-free at home

- Have a meeting to talk about making your home smoke-free.
- Set up a smoking area outside your home for smokers to use. Make sure it's not where the smoke will drift in through windows, doors or air vents.
- Tell visitors before they come over that your home is now smoke-free. If they smoke, it must be outside.
- Tell friends and family how much you value the changes they are making to be smoke-free.

In the home

Words you can use

- Could you please smoke outside from now on. This is really important to me.
- I'd appreciate it if you didn't smoke in the house.
- I get headaches from the smoke and it's really becoming a problem for me.
- The smoke makes my allergies worse. Could you please go outside to smoke.
- (In other people's homes) Excuse me, but cigarette smoke is really bad for my allergies. Would you please not smoke right now. I'd really appreciate it.

> **More TIPS** for a smoke-free home

- Put a no-smoking sign in your entry hallway or on the wall next to the door.
- Offer a "smoking coat" or sweatshirt to people who go outside to smoke. That way, they won't bring back third-hand smoke on their clothes.
- When a smoker comes back after smoking outside, ask them to wash their hands.



When you smoke, we all smoke.

Your pets breathe in second-hand smoke too. Pets are more likely to develop cancer and other health problems if they live in a home with smokers. Second-hand smoke has been linked to several types of cancer in dogs, cats and birds. Pets lick third-hand smoke from their fur when they groom themselves. So do birds when they pick through their feathers. This grooming adds to their cancer risk, especially for cats.

We want a smoke-free unit.



It can be harder to make your home smoke-free if you live in a condo or apartment building. When you share walls, vents and ducts of an apartment, you also share some of the air.

Ventilation systems (like air filters) in hallways and units can help clear some of the smoke. Air systems can help reduce the odour of smoke and may reduce eye and throat irritation, but they don't get rid of the chemicals completely. If you find that smoke still comes into your apartment, there are some things you can do to lessen the amount.

> **TIPS** to stop smoke from entering your unit

- Look for cracks and spaces between the walls and floor and for openings around windows, doors and plumbing. Then, block or seal all these open spaces with filling or sealing materials.

- Add weather-stripping around your front door and balcony door.
- Put door sweeps on the bottom of those doors – these fill the space between the floor and the bottom of the door.
- Place special gaskets behind electrical switch plates and outlet plates to block smoke.

Talk to your landlord or property manager

Share your concerns with your landlord or property manager, and ask for their help.

> **TIPS** to talk with your property manager

- Ask the property manager to check the ventilation system to make sure it's working properly so the air is a little cleaner.
- Keep track of where and when the smoke is entering your unit.
- Get the property manager to make repairs to seal off the smoke if you can't do it.
- If the smoke is coming from a specific unit, ask the landlord or property manager to try to block it. They can use the same methods in the smoker's unit that you used in your unit.
- If people are smoking in common areas – like the laundry room, pool area, stairwells or elevators – ask management to post no-smoking signs.
- Read your rental agreement. If all or part of your building is smoke-free, ask them to enforce the rules.

There may be other people in your building who are having the same problems as you are with second-hand smoke. You may want to work with them to try to get a no-smoking policy for the building or your floor. Share your group's concerns with the local tenant association or your condo board. They might be able to help.

Some people will feel okay talking directly to neighbours who smoke. Tell them about the problem and try to work out a solution together. They may not be aware that the smoke is coming into your unit.

In an apartment

Words you can use

- You probably don't know that smoke from your apartment is coming into our unit. I'd like to talk about it with you and try to find a solution. Maybe you could smoke outside instead.
- I'm having trouble breathing because I have asthma and the smoke from your unit comes into my apartment. Would you please smoke outside.

If you've tried everything else and are still no closer to living smoke-free, call your provincial or territorial residential tenancy office for advice. You may in the end decide to move to a smoke-free building or to rent in a newer building with better air quality. Some condos and apartment buildings are going smoke-free. Landlords and condo owners have the right to specify some apartment units or entire buildings as smoke-free. And more and more builders, landlords and owners are seeing that it can be easier to rent units in a smoke-free building.

Think about your passengers.



A car is a small, closed-in space. So if someone is smoking inside it, the toxic chemicals from second-hand smoke are even stronger. Some people think that rolling down the windows will get rid of the chemicals – but it doesn't. Neither does smoking with the cigarette outside the car. If you smoke inside your car, it gets coated in third-hand smoke too.

If you drive a vehicle for work, there may already be rules to follow that ban smoking or reduce the amount of second-hand smoke. If not, our tips can help.

> **TIPS** to be smoke-free in your car

- Clean the inside of your car, including a thorough vacuuming and shampooing to help get rid of most of the third-hand smoke.
- Tell passengers that your car is smoke-free.
- Put a no-smoking sign in the car.

- Stop for breaks on longer trips so that smokers can smoke outside and away from the car.
- Keep cigarettes out of reach, in the trunk or in the back of a pickup truck or van, so you're less likely to smoke.

In a car

Words you can use

- Please don't smoke when you're in the car. We can stop for breaks instead.
- The smoke inside the car gives me a headache. Could you please not smoke in here.
- There's a law that we can't smoke in a car with children. (Check to see if there's a law in your area.)

We want a safe, healthy workplace.



In Canada, almost all enclosed workplaces are smoke-free. But for some types of work, people still come into contact with second-hand smoke, especially if they have to enter someone's home. Workers who may still have to be around second-hand smoke include caregivers, tradespeople, emergency workers and police officers.

If you're an outside worker (for example, in construction, landscaping, farming or fishing), you may be around second-hand smoke more often because smoking may still be permitted onsite. Unfortunately, laws to protect non-smokers in some outdoor industries haven't caught up with the laws for inside workers.

If your workplace isn't smoke-free, talk to your employer about ways to reduce second-hand smoke or to make the workplace smoke-free. Encourage them to support programs to help employees quit smoking.

At work

Words you can use

- Can we make a no-smoking policy in this work area? The smoke here is really bothering me.
- Most other workplaces don't allow smoking. Is there a way to make our space smoke-free too?
- I've spoken to other people here, and we'd like this workplace to become smoke-free.



Even outside, the air can be smoke-free.

When you're outside – maybe waiting for the bus or enjoying a day in the park – you can still be around second-hand smoke. The good news is that in some parts of Canada, smoking has been banned from many outdoor spaces – schoolyards, playgrounds, parks, outdoor sports and concert venues and restaurant patios. But not all outdoor spaces are included. If someone is smoking around you outdoors, you can walk away from the smoker or take action with these tips.

> **TIPS** to be smoke-free outdoors

- Where smoking is not permitted, ask a person in charge to make smokers follow the no-smoking policy.
- If someone is smoking and you feel comfortable talking to them, let them know if it's a smoke-free area. Ask them to stop smoking or to move away from you.

- When going to an outside patio, ask if it's smoke-free. If it's not, you can sit inside or go to another place.
- When you're going to an event at an outdoor sports arena or entertainment venue, find out if it's smoke-free or if there's a no-smoking section.

Outdoors

Words you can use

- Excuse me. The smoke from your cigarette is bothering my allergies. Would you please not smoke here.
- Excuse me. You might not know that this is a no-smoking area.
- I'd appreciate it if you didn't smoke here with these children around.
- (To someone you know) I don't like to be around cigarette smoke. I'll wait for you over there.
- (To someone you know) Could I ask you a favour? The smoke is really bothering me. Would you please smoke somewhere else.

Live a smoke-free life

For more information about second-hand smoke or to learn more about how people quit smoking, call us toll-free Monday to Friday at 1-888-939-3333 (TTY 1-866-786-3934), email info@cis.cancer.ca or visit cancer.ca. If you need help in another language, interpreters are available.

If you're thinking about quitting, smokers' helplines have trained quit coaches who offer free, confidential help over the telephone. This service is available across Canada.

Call a smokers' helpline at one of these toll-free numbers.

British Columbia
1-877-455-2233

Alberta
1-866-710-7848

Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick,
Prince Edward Island, Yukon
1-877-513-5333

Quebec
1-866-527-7383

Nova Scotia
811

Newfoundland and Labrador
1-800-363-5864

Northwest Territories
1-866-286-5099

Nunavut
1-866-368-7848

We'd like to hear from you

Email us at publicationsfeedback@cancer.ca if you have comments or suggestions to help us make this brochure more useful for you and other readers.

What we do

The Canadian Cancer Society fights cancer by:

- doing everything we can to prevent cancer
- funding research to outsmart cancer
- empowering, informing and supporting Canadians living with cancer
- advocating for public policies to improve the health of Canadians
- rallying Canadians to get involved in the fight against cancer

Contact us for up-to-date information about cancer and our services or to make a donation.



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PREVENTING CANCER



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