

Fact Sheet 4—Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS) or Secondhand Smoke

Facts:

- Smokers inhale about 15 percent of the smoke from a cigarette. The rest goes into the air. The smoke from the burning end of a cigarette has more toxins than the smoke inhaled by the smoker.
- Tobacco smoke contains about 4,000 chemicals, including 40 linked to cancer. Secondhand smoke is linked to cancer of the nasal cavity, cervix, breast and bladder.
- Poisons such as formaldehyde, cyanide, arsenic, ammonia and carbon monoxide are released into the air while smoking.
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ranks secondhand smoke as one of the most dangerous substances known to cause cancer.
- Secondhand smoke is responsible for approximately 3,000 lung cancer deaths in nonsmokers annually.
- Each year, 37,000 people die from heart disease caused by secondhand smoke.
- Exposure to secondhand smoke on a daily basis (at home or at work) doubles the risk of having a heart attack.
- Secondhand smoke causes irritation of the eyes, nose, throat, and lungs.
- A nonsmoker married to a smoker has a 30 percent higher risk of getting lung cancer than a nonsmoker married to a nonsmoker.

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Secondhand Smoke Is Especially Harmful to Children

- Secondhand smoke increases the risk of serious respiratory diseases during the first two years of a child's life.
- Annually 300,000 cases of bronchitis and pneumonia in toddlers can be attributed to exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Secondhand smoke exposure can cause a build up of middle ear fluid in children resulting in middle ear infections and possible childhood hearing loss.
- Secondhand smoke irritates the lining of the airways triggering asthma flare-ups and/or may cause children to develop asthma.
- Children of smokers have an increased risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- Exposure to secondhand smoke and smoking while pregnant are both linked to miscarriage, low birth weight and stillbirth.