



Secondhand Smoke Fact Sheet

The Clean Indoor Air Worker Protection Law went into effect January 8, 2007. The law protects Philadelphians at work and in public from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke.

Facts about Secondhand Smoke:

Secondhand smoke is made up of “sidestream” smoke from the burning tip of a cigarette and “mainstream” smoke from the filter or mouth end. Altogether, it contains thousands of different chemicals that are released into the air as particles and gases, creating a serious health concern for everyone exposed.

The scientific evidence on the health risks associated with exposure to secondhand smoke is clear, convincing and overwhelming. Leading national and international scientific organizations - including the Environmental Protection Agency, the Surgeon General, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, and the World Health Organization - have documented the dangers of secondhand smoke.

- Secondhand smoke is classified as a Class-A carcinogen — the same classification given to toxic substances like asbestos.¹
- Secondhand smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals, including 69 compounds that are known to cause cancer. Anyone who breathes secondhand smoke is breathing in formaldehyde, ammonia, cyanide, arsenic, carbon monoxide, methane and thousands of other chemicals.² The concentration of these carcinogenic chemicals is actually higher in secondhand smoke than in the fumes inhaled directly by smokers.
- Secondhand smoke is a known cause of: lung cancer, heart disease, chronic lung ailments such as bronchitis and asthma (particularly in children) and low birth weights.³
- According to experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, people with existing heart conditions who are exposed to secondhand smoke, even for just 30 minutes, increase their risk of a heart attack. The CDC experts advise persons with heart disease to avoid indoor settings where smoking is allowed.⁴
- Each year, exposure to secondhand smoke is estimated to result in at least 38,000 deaths in the United States and over one million illnesses in children.⁵ In fact, more people die from secondhand smoke than from car accidents or illegal drugs. In Pennsylvania alone, at least 1,800 deaths per year are attributable to secondhand smoke exposure.
- Secondhand smoke is especially dangerous to children, particularly for young children with developing respiratory systems. Secondhand smoke can cause pneumonia; ear infections;

lower respiratory tract infections; irritate a child's asthma and allergies causing longer and more severe attacks; and is linked to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

- If you are pregnant and are regularly exposed to secondhand smoke, you have a greater chance of having a more difficult delivery; having a smaller than average baby; and having a sick baby.
- The toxins in secondhand smoke can cause respiratory problems, including wheezing, asthma attacks, shortness of breath, and excessive coughing even long after exposure. Before California bars went smoke-free in 1998, 74% of San Francisco bartenders reported experiencing respiratory symptoms. Within two months of bars going smoke-free, complaints of these symptoms dropped by almost 60%.⁶

¹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Office of Research and Development & Office of Air and Radiation, *Respiratory Health Effects of Passive Smoking: Lung Cancer and Other Disorders*, EPA/600/6-90/006F, December 1992, <http://www.epa.gov/nceawww1/ets/etsindex.htm>.

² National Cancer Institute. Risks Associated with Smoking Cigarettes with Low Machine-Measured Yields of Tar and Nicotine. Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph No. 13. Bethesda, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute, NIH Pub. No. 02-5074, October 2001. http://dccps.nci.nih.gov/tcrb/monographs/13/m13_5.pdf.

³ National Cancer Institute. *Health Effects of Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke: The Report of the California Environmental Protection Agency. Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph no. 10*. Bethesda, MD. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute, NIH Pub. No. 99-4645, 1999, http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/tcrb/nci_monographs/MONO10/MONO10.HTM.

⁴ Pechacek, T. & Babb, S., "Commentary: How acute and reversible are the cardiovascular risks of secondhand smoke?," *British Medical Journal*, 328 (7446): 980-983, April 24, 2004, <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/328/7446/980>.

⁵ National Cancer Institute. *Health Effects of Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke: The Report of the California Environmental Protection Agency. Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph no. 10*. Bethesda, MD. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute, NIH Pub. No. 994645, 1999, http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/tcrb/nci_monographs/MONO10/MONO10.HTM.

⁶ Eisner, M., "Bartenders' Respiratory Health After Establishment of Smoke-Free Bars and Taverns," *JAMA*. 1998;280:1909-1914. <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/280/22/1909>. See also For Non Smokers' Rights, "Secondhand Smoke: Worker Health." December 2004. <http://www.no-smoke.org/htmlpage.php?id=27>

