



# Second-hand smoke



Everyone knows that smoking is harmful to the smoker's health. Second-hand smoke is also dangerous to non-smokers, particularly children.

## Second-hand smoke

Second-hand smoke is the smoke breathed out by a person smoking, as well as the smoke that drifts from the end of a burning cigarette.

## Harm from second-hand smoke

There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke. Smoking around others exposes them to the same dangerous chemicals as the smoker. Cigarette smoke contains over 70 chemicals known to cause cancer.

The more exposure a non-smoker has to tobacco smoke, the greater the risk to their health. It affects the smoker's close contacts and other people who inhale the smoke that comes through windows, air-conditioning vents and under doors. It is estimated for every ten smokers who die from a tobacco related disease, one non-smoker will also die.

Chemicals from second-hand smoke can remain on surfaces in the home for months. This residue can be on curtains, floors, furniture, and toys, as well as the smoker's clothes, hair and skin.

Second-hand smoke causes lung cancer and coronary heart disease in adults. It has also been linked to breast cancer and nasal sinus cancer. It is especially dangerous to babies and children. Children are more susceptible to tobacco smoke because their lungs and immune system are still developing.

Babies (including unborn babies) and children who are exposed to second-hand smoke have an increased risk of developing a range of illnesses including:

- Brain tumours
- Lymphomas
- Acute Lymphocytic leukaemia
- Lung cancer (later in life)
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Coughing, wheezing, asthma and breathing problems
- Poor lung function and health
- Painful ear infections
- Bronchitis, croup, pneumonia and other lung or airway infections
- Irritation of the eyes and nose.

The more smokers there are at home, the more the risk increases for the non-smokers to develop a tobacco-related disease.

## Protecting others from second-hand smoke

- Have a smoke-free home to protect others from the harmful effects of tobacco smoke.
- Make your car smoke-free
- Move away from other people if you are smoking outside.
- Talk to your GP about quitting smoking. This is the best thing you can do for your health, and the health of those around you
- Ask others to smoke outside. Let visitors know that your home is smoke-free.



## Common myths about second-hand smoke

**MYTH:**  
*Smoking in another room will not harm anyone.*

Even if you have the door closed, the smoke can spread to other areas of the home. The residue can stick to furniture, floors, toys and other objects. If you are inside the house there is no safe distance between smokers and others.

**MYTH:**  
*Opening a window means the second-hand smoke will leave the home.*

Even when you smoke beside an open window, some of the smoke will spread to other parts of the home.

**MYTH:**  
*Smoking when no-one is home cannot harm them.*

Second-hand smoke lingers in the home long after a cigarette is finished. Contamination from smoke can stay in the home for weeks and even months after smoking has stopped.

**MYTH:**  
*Smoking just outside the door will protect others from second-hand smoke.*

Smoke can still drift inside. Move at least four metres from open doors or windows so smoke does not drift into your home. Shut the doors and windows to keep the smoke outside.