



The Smoke Around You

The Risks
of
Involuntary
Smoking

What Should You Know?

Have you ever breathed the smoke that curls up from the tip of someone's cigarette? Have you ever breathed the smoke exhaled by a smoker? If so, then you have breathed most of the same harmful, cancer-causing parts of smoke inhaled by smokers. As an involuntary smoker—a nonsmoker breathing the smoke from others—you are at increased risk. Former US Surgeon General C. Everett Koop said, "It is now clear that disease risk due to inhalation of tobacco smoke is not limited to the individual who is smoking."

The risk of developing disease depends on the amount of tobacco smoke exposure. As an involuntary smoker, you breathe less tobacco smoke than an active smoker because the smoke mixes with the air around you. But the Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 3,700 lung cancer deaths annually—nearly 3% of the annual lung cancer death toll—have been caused by involuntary smoking.

Involuntary smoking also causes heart disease, aggravates asthmatic conditions, and impairs blood circulation.

Why Should You Know?

The Surgeon General and the National Academy of Sciences recently examined the evidence surrounding involuntary smoking. Both studies agreed:

Exposure to other people's smoke increases the risk of developing lung cancer.

Other studies have also proven there are dangers for nonsmokers who breathe the smoke from cigarettes. The studies found out that:

Overall, nonsmoking wives of husbands who smoke have a 30% increased risk of lung cancer compared with women whose husbands don't smoke.

In several studies, nonsmokers married to heavy smokers were found to have 2 to 3 times the risk of lung cancer compared with those married to nonsmokers.

An American Cancer Society study found that nonsmokers exposed to 20 or more cigarettes a day at home had twice the risk of developing lung cancer.

Such studies have focused on people who live with smokers; if you live with just one smoker, you are at risk for lung cancer.

There's also cause for concern in the workplace. Tobacco smoke spreads quickly, and each workday is more than enough time to expose most people within many working environments. Even if you don't sit next to smokers, the smoky air within a building may be harmful.

What About Kids?

Lung cancer is not the only hazard that faces involuntary smokers. For instance, the children of smokers have a greater chance of developing certain illnesses such as:

- colds;
- bronchitis and pneumonia, especially during the first two years of life;
- chronic coughs, especially as children get older;
- ear infections; and
- reduced lung function.

As with adults, the more smoke a child is exposed to, the more that child's risk is increased. Therefore, if it is the smoking parent who handles most of the child care, the child's chances of developing the ailments listed above is greater. And of course, the risk is highest if *both* parents smoke.

Who's Taking Action?

As we learn more about the harmful effects of involuntary smoking, the public interest in nonsmoking rules grows. There has been an increasing amount of new legislation protecting the rights of nonsmokers:

- As of 1990, forty-five states, the District of Columbia, and 480 municipalities limit or restrict smoking in public places.
 - Thirty-five states have enacted laws that address smoking in public workplaces, 15 have enacted laws that address it in private workplaces.
 - Smoking restrictions have been put into effect in all US Government buildings.
 - The US Army adopted a new policy banning smoking in Army facilities, except in established smoking areas.
 - In 1986, a nationwide survey of 662 private employees showed that 36% had policies on employee smoking. Another 21% had policies under consideration.
 - Hotels, motels, and car rental agencies continue to set aside more rooms and vehicles for nonsmokers.
 - Smoking has been banned on all domestic flights in the continental US.
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What Can You Do?

Now that you know that all smoke is harmful, what can you do to help fight the problem?

- If you smoke, stop.
- If others in your household smoke, help them to stop.
- Ask to be seated in the nonsmoking sections of restaurants and public transportation.
- Make certain that your children's schools and their child-care situations are smoke-free.
- Help negotiate for a smoke-free work environment.
- Ask visitors not to smoke in your home.
- Encourage hospitals and clinics to become smoke-free.
- Let your legislators know where you stand on nonsmokers' rights issues, and that you will support their efforts to pass laws designed to protect the nonsmoker.
- Call your local American Cancer Society and ask how you can become active in the effort to reduce smoking in your community.



FOR MORE INFORMATION
CALL THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY TOLL FREE
1-800-ACS-2345



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