



Fact Sheet

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control • www.scdhec.gov

Secondhand Smoke

When you are exposed to smoke in the environment it is called secondhand smoke or environmental tobacco smoke. Secondhand smoke is a combination of two types of smoke, mainstream and sidestream. Mainstream smoke is the smoke exhaled by a person who is smoking. Sidestream smoke is the smoke from the end of a burning cigarette, pipe or cigar.

Why is it harmful?

Secondhand smoke contains the same harmful chemicals inhaled by smokers. It has more than 4,000 chemicals.¹ Secondhand smoke can cause or worsen health effects such as lung cancer, coronary heart disease and respiratory symptoms² (such as asthma). There is a strong link between secondhand smoke and health effects in children. Secondhand smoke exposure can cause low birth weight, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), middle ear infections, and chest infections.² Secondhand smoke may induce asthma in children or make symptoms worse.²

Steps to Avoid Secondhand Smoke

- Keep your home and car smoke-free.
- Have guests and family members smoke outside.
- If family members smoke, encourage them to quit.
- If you or a family member smokes, talk to a healthcare provider about quitting.
- Visit businesses, restaurants and other public places that are smoke-free.
- Tell businesses you frequent you prefer smoke-free environments.
- Try to work in a smoke-free environment.

For more information, contact:

S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control
www.scdhec.gov/tobacco

American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/tobacco

S.C. Tobacco Quitline
1-800-QUIT-NOW

Reference

1. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Respiratory Health Effects of Passive Smoking*. Lung Cancer and Other Disorders. December 1992.
2. California Environment Protection Agency. *Health Effects of Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke*. Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, September 1997



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