
THE MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT SECONDHAND SMOKE

There are several misconceptions regarding how to stay protected from secondhand smoke. Here are 5 common myths, and the facts about each of them.

MYTH > Smoking doesn't hurt anybody but the smoker.

FACT > After just a few minutes of exposure to secondhand smoke, a nonsmoker can begin to exhibit health problems comparable to those of smokers. Secondhand smoke causes disease and death in people who don't smoke, including coronary heart disease, stroke and lung cancer. In fact, secondhand smoke kills nearly 50,000 nonsmokers each year.

MYTH > Smoking in another room doesn't harm anyone.

FACT > Secondhand smoke can spread throughout homes and apartment buildings in a number of unexpected ways:

- Ventilation and forced air systems
- Doors and windows
- Electrical outlets
- Cable and phone jacks
- Ceiling fixtures and crawl spaces
- Gaps around sinks, countertops, cabinets or walls
- Neighbors' balconies and common areas

MYTH > Opening a window or turning on a fan gets rid of most of the secondhand smoke.

FACT > There is no safe level of ventilation that will completely eliminate secondhand smoke. Also, when a window is opened, smoke can actually flow back into the room.

MYTH > Smoking while no one is home will not hurt anybody.

FACT > Secondhand smoke lingers long after a cigarette is smoked. It can cling to dust and surfaces, as well as rugs, curtains, clothes, food and furniture for days, weeks, months and even years. Also, since people spend a majority of their time at home, the exposure is likely to be prolonged, increasing the risk of illness or disease.

MYTH > Air fresheners or purifiers can get rid of most secondhand smoke.

FACT > Air fresheners only mask the smell of the smoke, and not even expensive ventilation or air filtration systems can completely eliminate secondhand smoke. Secondhand smoke is made of both particles and gases. While most air purifiers can reduce the number of fine smoke particles in the air, they are not designed to remove the gases, which contain toxic, cancer-causing chemicals.

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