

Rhinelandersafe **SMOKE-FREE AIR FOR EVERYONE**

RHINELANDER, WISCONSIN

FACT SHEET HEALTH EFFECTS OF SECONDHAND SMOKE

Secondhand Smoke Causes Cancer in Nonsmokers. Secondhand smoke is a complex mixture of nearly 5,000 chemical compounds including more than 50 known cancer-causing agents. The 1986 U.S. Surgeon General's report on involuntary smoking was the first to conclude that secondhand smoke is a cause of lung cancer in healthy nonsmokers. Since then, numerous scientific studies have confirmed the link between secondhand smoke and lung cancer. It is conservatively estimated that at least 3,000 nonsmokers die each year from lung cancer caused by secondhand smoke.

Secondhand Smoke Causes Heart Disease in Nonsmokers. The increased risk of heart disease from secondhand smoke exposure is much greater than the lung cancer risk. It is estimated that as many as 62,000 nonsmokers die each year from heart disease caused by secondhand smoke. New research shows a smoke-free workplace law can reduce the number of heart attacks in a community by 40%.

Accumulating evidence suggests that even short-term exposure to secondhand smoke can trigger a heart attack. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control recommends that physicians advise their patients who either have or are at risk for cardiovascular disease to avoid indoor places where they can be exposed to secondhand smoke.

Secondhand Smoke Causes Disease in Children. Strong evidence has shown that children who are exposed to secondhand smoke are at considerably higher risk for illness since their lungs and respiratory tissues are still developing. Infants and children exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to develop pneumonia, bronchitis, asthma, and middle ear disease. As many as 300,000 cases of lower respiratory tract infections in children up to 18 months old and up to 2,700 deaths from sudden infant death syndrome each year are attributable to secondhand smoke exposure. In addition to inducing new cases of asthma, secondhand smoke also increases the number and severity of asthma attacks in children.

Workers At Significant Risk. Virtually everyone is at some risk of harm from exposure to secondhand smoke but those who work where smoking is allowed are at greater risk. In fact, workplace exposure to secondhand smoke causes more death and disease than all other regulated occupational substances combined. Restaurant and bar employees have been found to be at an even higher risk of disease due to their disproportionate exposure to secondhand smoke - fewer than 13 percent of bartenders and 28 percent of waiters have the benefit of a smoke-free workplace. In comparison, over 75 percent of all white-collar workers, including 90 percent of teachers, are protected by smoke-free workplace policies. Research has shown that there may be a 50 percent increase in lung cancer risk among food service workers that is attributable to their secondhand smoke exposure. One study found that the average exposure level for bar and restaurant workers was sufficient to double the risk of a fatal asthma attack.

Sources: American Cancer Society, American Lung Association, CDC, Office of US Surgeon General