Why second-hand smoke is bad for you

The dangers of second-hand smoking are extensive. Few people realise just how bad it can really be. Most people assume that it is associated with certain health risks when in fact, it is a known cause of certain medical problems including some cancers, heart disease, and stroke.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, second-hand smoke can lead to coronary heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer in adults.

In children and infants it can cause more frequent and severe asthma attacks, respiratory infections, ear infections, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

In fact:

- *If you are exposed to second-hand smoke* at work or home, you have a 25-30% increased risk for developing heart disease, and a 20-30% increased risk for stroke.
- *Even brief exposure is bad* for you as second-hand smoke can damage the lining of blood vessels and cause the blood platelets to thicken, which could cause a heart attack.
- *Non-smokers who are exposed to second-hand smoke* at home or at work increase their risk of developing lung cancer by 20-30%. Non-smokers, until recently, were exposed to cigarette smoke in public areas, and were therefore at risk of all the above.

The good news is that regardless of your current smoking status, exposure to second-hand smoke can be reduced.

As a starting point, you could consider these tips from the World Health Organisation:

- *Ban smoking at home*, in the car, and in enclosed spaces frequented by non-smokers.
- *Politely ask visitors to smoke outdoors* and don't join them while they smoke.
- *Avoid taking children* to enclosed outdoor areas where people are smoking, such as courtyards. Ensure people caring for your children use a smoke-free environment.

Interested in quitting?

Quitting smoking permanently and safely can be challenging and take several attempts. Furthermore, there's no one-size-fits-all strategy.

For individual advice or support, consult your doctor.

Healthy lifestyle