

Why Quit Smoking and Avoid Second Hand Smoke?

Passive smoke and environmental tobacco smoke are names for secondhand smoke. When a person is exposed to second hand smoke, they are exposed to the same compounds that smokers are. Secondhand smoke can cause the same health issues as smoking. These include lung cancer, heart disease, lower respiratory tract infections, increase in number and severity of asthma attacks, low birth weight babies born to the mothers who have been exposed to second hand smoke, increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and other respiratory problems such as coughing, phlegm and reduced lung function.

The EPA classifies secondhand smoke as a “known human carcinogen”. This classification means that secondhand smoke can cause cancer. Three conclusions about secondhand smoke were in the 1986 Surgeon General’s report. 1) Secondhand smoke causes disease such as lung cancer in nonsmokers, 2) it causes more frequent respiratory infections in children of smokers than nonsmokers and 3) separating smokers from nonsmokers who are sharing an area reduces but does not eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke.

Smokers are 2-4 times as likely to get heart disease as nonsmokers. They also have 2 times the risk of dieing from a sudden heart attack than nonsmokers. Smoking is the top risk factor for lung cancer. 8 out of 10 cases of lung cancer are caused by smoking. The more a person has smoked both time wise and number wise of cigarettes, cigars or pipes, the more apt they are to develop lung cancer. The risk of lung cancer is lessened by stopping smoking. Smoking low tar cigarettes does not appear to lower the risk of lung cancer. Nonsmoking spouses of smokers are 30% more likely to develop lung cancer than spouses of nonsmokers.

Useful websites:

- http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/PED_10_2X_Secondhand_Smoke-Clean_Indoor_Air.asp
- http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/Factsheets/SecondhandSmoke.htm
- <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/secondhandsmoke.html>

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