

TOBACCO FACT SHEET

SECONDHAND SMOKE AND THIRDHAND SMOKE AND MULTIUNIT HOUSING



- Secondhand smoke (SHS), also known as environmental tobacco smoke (ETS), is a mixture of smoke given off by the burning end of cigarettes, pipes, or cigars, and smoke exhaled from smokers, which can be involuntarily inhaled by nonsmokers.¹ In the U.S., about 49,000 people die each year from secondhand smoke-related lung cancer and heart disease.²
- Thirdhand smoke (THS) is residual nicotine and other chemical contamination that remains on indoor surfaces after smoking has ceased.^{3,4} One study found that THS accumulates and persists in smokers' homes even after they remain vacant for two months and are cleaned for new residents.⁵
- Approximately 2.1 million Americans lived in public housing during May 2012 – August 2013.⁶ Multiunit housing (MUH), which includes an apartment, duplex, double/multifamily home, condominium, or town house⁷ residents are at elevated risk for home exposure to SHS from seepage through walls, windows, wiring, plumbing, and ventilation systems and under doors.^{8,9} They can also be exposed in common areas or from outside on balconies and patios where smoking is allowed.¹⁰

ATTITUDES & BELIEFS

- A nationally representative study showed that among all respondents living in MUH, 56% supported smoke-free building policy implementation.⁷ However, acceptance varies by smoking status. Studies show that more nonsmokers and former smokers support smoke-free MUH policies as opposed to current smokers.^{11,12}
- One study found that 91% of parents believe that THS can harm the health of babies and children.¹³ Fathers and parents who smoke more than 10 cigarettes per day were less likely to agree with the statement. Parents who received advice to have a smoke-free home or car or to quit smoking were more likely to agree that THS can be harmful.¹³

HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF SHS AND THS IN MULTIUNIT HOUSING

- Research shows that SHS undergoes numerous chemical changes after it is released into the air: it can adsorb to indoor surfaces, desorb back into the air and undergo chemical changes as it ages. Exposure to these chemicals through the skin and in the lungs may contribute to smoking-attributable morbidity and mortality.¹⁴
- One study confirmed the health risks of THS by demonstrating that exposure to THS causes DNA damage in human cells.¹⁵
- Children are especially susceptible to THS exposure because they breathe near, crawl, play on, touch, and mouth contaminated surfaces.¹⁶

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- ¹³Drehmer JE, Ossip DJ, Rigotti NA, et al. Pediatrician interventions and thirdhand smoke beliefs of parents. *Am J Prev Med.* Nov 2012;43(5):533-536.
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