



## Thirdhand Smoke Fact Sheet

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### Navigation Services



Need more information? Contact our Navigation Services Team at 303-432-5130 or [navigation@jcmh.org](mailto:navigation@jcmh.org)

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#### **What is thirdhand smoke, and why is it a concern?**

Thirdhand smoke is residual nicotine and chemicals left on a variety of indoor surfaces by tobacco smoke. Studies show that thirdhand smoke clings to hair, skin, clothes, furniture, drapes, walls, bedding, carpets, dust, vehicles, and other surfaces, even long after smoking has stopped. This residue reacts with common indoor pollutants to create a toxic mix containing cancer-causing substances that pose a potential health hazard to nonsmokers who are exposed to it. Infants, children, and nonsmoking adults may be at risk of tobacco-related health problems when they inhale, ingest, or touch substances containing thirdhand smoke.

#### **What are the dangers associated with thirdhand smoke exposure?**

- Those exposed to thirdhand smoke have higher risk of heart disease, stroke, and other smoking related diseases.
- Thirdhand smoke is a health hazard for infants and children, who are particularly vulnerable because they are often held close to hair, clothes, and skin. They can ingest tobacco residue by putting their hands in their mouths after touching contaminated surfaces.
  - Infants exposed are more likely to die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
  - Infants and children who are exposed have an increased risk of asthma. For those with asthma, symptoms can worsen.
- Once on surfaces, tobacco residue can easily be reintroduced into the air, resulting in particles that over time could contribute to cancer and breathing problems, like asthma.

#### **How do you protect yourself?**

Thirdhand smoke builds up over time and resists normal household cleaning. It can't be eliminated by airing out rooms, opening windows or using fans or air conditioners, or confining smoking to certain indoor areas. The only way to protect nonsmokers from thirdhand smoke is to create a smoke-free environment, whether that's your private home or vehicle, or in public places, such as hotels and restaurants. The best thing you can do for your health and the health of those around you is to get help quitting smoking.

Additionally, you can:

- Make it a rule that you do not allow smoking in your home, car, or where children play.
- Try to keep children out of the homes of people who smoke. Meet at smoke-free place instead.
- Protect family, friends, and coworkers by smoking outside, washing hands and hair, and by changing clothes before coming in contact with nonsmokers, especially infants and children.

Information from Breathe Easy Coalition of Maine at:

[https://smokingcessationleadership.ucsf.edu/sites/smokingcessationleadership.ucsf.edu/files/thirdhand\\_smoke\\_flyer\\_maine.pdf](https://smokingcessationleadership.ucsf.edu/sites/smokingcessationleadership.ucsf.edu/files/thirdhand_smoke_flyer_maine.pdf)