

WARNING: You don't have to smoke to die from it. Second-hand smoke kills.

Second-Hand Smoke Kills

Fact Sheet 2

Second-hand smoke—the smoke we breathe from other people's cigarettes—kills more than 40,000 people in the United States each year. In fact, more people die from secondhand smoke than from car accidents or illegal drugs. In New York City, more people—approximately 1,000 every year—are killed by second-hand smoke than by homicide. In addition, second-hand smoke causes illness, such as ear infections in children, asthma, and respiratory infections, in more than 40,000 New Yorkers every year.

Second-hand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, such as formaldehyde, cyanide, ammonia, carbon monoxide, naphthalene (moth balls), cadmium (battery acid), and acetone (nail polish remover). More than 40 of these chemicals have been proven to cause cancer, including arsenic, benzene, and vinyl chloride, which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has classified as "Group A" carcinogens. The concentration of these carcinogenic chemicals is actually *higher* in second-hand smoke than in the fumes inhaled directly by smokers.

Leading national and international scientific organizations, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Surgeon General, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, and the World Health Organization have documented the dangers of second-hand smoke.

Even a little second-hand smoke is harmful.

Second-hand smoke is a major cause of heart disease, stroke, respiratory disease, lung cancer, and many other illnesses.

- ◆ Just 30 minutes of exposure to second-hand smoke produces some of the same physical reactions as would occur from smoking.
- ◆ Second-hand smoke causes 3,000 lung cancer deaths each year among non-smokers in the U.S.
- ◆ The number of cancer deaths caused by second-hand smoke is higher than the total number of cancer deaths caused by asbestos, radionuclides, arsenic, benzene, vinyl chloride, radiation, pesticides, hazardous waste sites, chemicals found in drinking water, industrial chemicals, contaminated sludge, and mining waste **combined**.

Second-hand smoke poses a particular threat to children.

Second-hand smoke increases low birth-weight deliveries among non-smoking women, and greatly increases the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Nationally, each year second-hand smoke causes:

- ◆ Up to 26,000 new cases of asthma;
- ◆ Up to 2.2 million ear infections;
- ◆ 150,000 to 300,000 cases of lower respiratory tract infections; and
- ◆ Up to 2,700 deaths from SIDS.