



Second and Third-Hand Smoke

Commercial tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in Canada and has negative health effects for all ages. But did you know: exposure to second and third-hand smoke increases health risks to non-smokers?

WHAT IS SECOND-HAND SMOKE?

Second-hand smoke is smoke that comes directly from a burning tobacco product (cigarette, pipe or cigar) as well as the smoke exhaled by the person smoking. Over 7,000 chemicals and toxins are found in second-hand smoke.

Exposure to second-hand smoke increases risk for:

- Breathing problems
- Cancer
- Heart disease
- Lung disease

Second-hand smoke negatively affects the health of infants, children and pregnant women. Health impacts include:

- Miscarriage, stillbirth, and birth defects
- Low birth weights and preterm delivery
- SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome)
- Fluid buildup in the middle ear, which may lead to ear infections
- Respiratory infections and long term complications like asthma, bronchitis, and pneumonia

WHAT IS THIRD-HAND SMOKE?

Third-hand smoke, a term first introduced in 2009, is the residue that's left behind from second-hand smoke. Third-hand smoke contains more than 250 chemicals.

- Smoke doesn't just disappear. It remains in houses, apartments, vehicles, and hotel rooms.
- It gets trapped in hair, skin, fabric, carpet, furniture, and toys, for hours or even days after the tobacco source is extinguished.
- It may leave a yellowish-brown residue on ceilings and walls, or even a stale smoke odour.
- It can cling to natural household dust, and can be absorbed through the skin and ingested by infants and children who are constantly playing on these surfaces and putting their hands in their mouths.
- Exposure to third-hand smoke has been linked to liver, lung, and skin problems.



WHAT ABOUT VAPING?

Currently, there are not enough studies to determine the health impacts of second and third-hand vapour. However, non-users can still be exposed to harmful chemicals found in vapour/aerosols. What about vaping?

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF AND OTHERS FROM SECOND AND THIRD-HAND SMOKE?

- The best thing you can do for your health and the health of others is quit the use of tobacco and vapour products. It is important to know you are not alone, and that there is help and support for loved ones to quit as well.
- Vapour or aerosols also contain unsafe chemicals.
- Wear a “smoking shirt” and remove it before coming back inside. Hang it outside.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after smoking or vaping.
- Remember: smoke and vapour are harmful to your health. Reduce your exposure as much as possible.

If you want to quit or decrease your tobacco and vapour use, talk to your primary care provider (such as a doctor or nurse practitioner). You can also access the following cessation resources below:

- [QuitNow](#) offers free information, support, and counseling by trained professionals by phone, text, or email.
- [BC Smoking Cessation Program](#) everyone in BC can access 12 weeks of free nicotine replacement therapy (gum, patch, inhaler and lozenges) per calendar year through their local pharmacy. Women who are pregnant or lactating are advised to consult with their doctor or pharmacist.
- [First Nations Health Authority Benefits](#) program offers supplementary coverage for nicotine replacement therapy.

In this resource, as in most public health messages, “tobacco use” refers to the use of commercial tobacco products like cigarettes and chewing tobacco as opposed to traditional uses of tobacco.

Developed by Tobacco Reduction and Maternal Infant and Child Leads