

What is secondhand smoke?

Secondhand smoke is a combination of smoke:

- From the end of a lighted cigarette, pipe or cigar.
- Exhaled by a smoker.

Nonsmokers who breathe secondhand smoke are breathing nicotine and other harmful chemicals, just as smokers do. These substances stay in the air, even after the cigarette, pipe, or cigar is gone. Smoking “light” or menthol cigarettes or only smoking a few cigarettes does not lessen the harmful effects of breathing secondhand smoke.

What you may not know

According to the American Lung Association, secondhand smoke causes about 3,000 deaths each year from lung cancer and 35,000 deaths a year from heart disease in people who don’t smoke. Secondhand smoke is most dangerous to fetuses, infants, and children because it can damage developing organs, including the lungs and brain.

Exposing children to secondhand smoke affects their health and life:

- SIDS
- Asthma and severe asthma attacks
- Allergies
- Sore throats and coughs
- Ear infections
- Pneumonia
- Bronchitis

Children who are exposed to secondhand smoke miss more school and activities.

Blowing smoke away, going into another room to smoke, or opening a window won’t protect you or your family from secondhand smoke.

What you can do

Don’t smoke, and don’t allow others to smoke around your children. Don’t be shy about asking people—including family members or other adults—to not smoke inside your home or car. This may feel strange at first, but most smokers will understand and respect your decision.

To prevent smoking-related fires and accidental poisonings, keep all lighters, matches, cigarettes, cigars, tobacco, and ashtrays out of the reach of children. Permanently remove the lighter and ashtray from your car.

Special note to mothers

Babies are 2–3 times more likely to die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) if their mothers smoke during and after pregnancy. Smoking during pregnancy increases risk of miscarriage, low birth weight, and stillbirth. If you have children or are pregnant, it’s important not to smoke. Also note that nicotine and other harmful chemicals can be transferred to infants during breastfeeding.

Quit-tobacco resources

Programs to help you quit are available to qualifying Kaiser Permanente members as part of their coverage agreement. For more information or to register, contact the Quit for Life® Program at 1-800-462-5327 or visit quitnow.net/kpwa.

The **Kaiser Permanente Resource Line** can send information on a variety of health topics. Call weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 1-800-992-2279.

Visit the **Kaiser Permanente website** at kp.org/wa and consult the Health and Wellness Resources section for information on a variety of health topics.

Contact the **American Lung Association** for more information about the effects of smoking at 1-800-LUNG-USA, or online at www.lungusa.org.

Protect your child from secondhand smoke

- What is secondhand smoke?
- What you can do
- Where to go for more help