

# THE FACTS ABOUT...

## Secondhand Smoke

In restaurants, at work and in other public places, smoking endangers smokers and nonsmokers alike. The largest by-product of smoking, secondhand smoke is a proven health threat.

Secondhand smoke is second only to tobacco use as a cause of preventable death in Michigan.

### What is secondhand smoke?

It is the mixture of poisons and toxic chemicals that come off the end of a burning cigarette and is also a Group A carcinogen, a substance known to cause cancer for which there is no safe level of exposure. Secondhand smoke is proven to cause heart disease, lung cancer, emphysema and asthma.

### Big Tobacco's disguise

The tobacco industry has defended secondhand smoke for decades suggesting that it has no detrimental health effects. They argue that because it poses no significant health risk, smoking regulations in workplaces, restaurants and other public places should not be allowed. One tobacco company went so far as to state on its website that, *"while smoking can be annoying and irritating to non-smokers, we do not believe that the scientific evidence, taken as a whole, is sufficient to establish that environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) is a cause of disease."*

But a 1992 report done by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reported that secondhand smoke is in fact a human lung carcinogen. In fact, a federal judge ruled in a 1998 case that *"It is beyond dispute that secondhand smoke is a carcinogen."*

### Secondhand smoke and health

#### Adults

- Lifelong nonsmokers living with smokers have a 24 percent higher chance of contracting lung cancer than those living with nonsmokers
- Even a half hour of exposure to secondhand smoke dramatically increases a person's short-term risk of heart attack
- Nonsmokers regularly exposed to secondhand smoke suffer death rates 30 percent higher than that of unexposed nonsmokers

#### Effect on children

- Coughs and wheezing
- Bronchitis, asthma, pneumonia
- Potentially fatal lower respiratory tract infections
- Eye and ear problems

### What doesn't work

This raises the difficult question about what to do about risks from secondhand smoke. Tobacco companies maintain that separate smoking sections in restaurants and other public places are adequate. They push for ventilation technology as a sensible accommodation that makes smoke free environments necessary. Still, based on current scientific knowledge, ventilation systems are incapable of removing all the toxic components of secondhand smoke from the air.

The bottom line is that there is no credible data that can claim there is any safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

**Source:** Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids



A GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO PROMOTING TOBACCO-FREE ENVIRONMENTS AND TO IMPROVING HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGH EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY.