

What is secondhand smoke?

Whenever you light up, secondhand smoke is produced. This is the smoke exhaled by you, plus the smoke created by the lit end of a cigarette. This isn't just unpleasant, it can be a killer. Secondhand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, many of which are irritants and toxins, including:

- Arsenic, which can be found in rat poison
- Benzene, which is found in petrol fumes and can cause leukemia
- And cyanide, which is poisonous and an industrial pollutant

The smoke also contains other chemicals, many of which are irritants or toxins and more than 50 are known carcinogens. They're the ones that can cause cancer.

Just because you can't see it doesn't mean it's harmless. People who breathe in secondhand smoke are at risk of the same diseases as smokers, including cancer and heart disease.

Secondhand smoke and your family

Secondhand smoke is dangerous for anyone exposed to it, but children are especially vulnerable as they have less well-developed airways, lungs and immune systems. Up to five million children across the UK are regularly exposed to secondhand smoke in the home, which puts them at risk in the following ways:

- Children exposed to secondhand smoke are at risk of bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma attacks, meningitis and ear infections.
- Babies exposed to second-hand smoke are more at risk of cot death.
- Breathing second-hand smoke increases a child's or an adult's risk of lung cancer by 24% and heart disease by 25%

Children breathing in other people's cigarette smoke resulted in 300,000 GP visits and 9,500 hospital admissions for children every year.

What if i open windows or smoke in a different room?

Opening windows and doors or smoking in another room in the house will not make it safe for those around you. Harmful cigarette smoke can still blow back inside. And because more than 80% of smoke is invisible, you can't see where it goes making it impossible to control.

Quitting smoking is the best thing you can do you protect your family from second hand smoke.

It's not just about the physical effects smoking has on your family.

Nearly three quarters of children worry that their mum or dad will die because they smoke. Not only that, but if you smoke, your children are three times more likely to smoke when they grow up. By quitting, your children will be less likely to take up smoking.

- Children exposed to a smoky atmosphere are more likely to suffer from breathing problems, allergies and chest infections. By not smoking, you protect the health of those close to you.