



Department of Health
140 County Highway 33W
Suite 3
Cooperstown, NY 13326
Phone: (607) 547-6483
Fax: (607) 547-4385

NEWS RELEASE

Secondhand Smoke

The Surgeon General has stated for years that there is no such thing as risk-free exposure to secondhand smoke. Even people who do not smoke can be harmed by smoke from those who do. And yet, almost half of all nonsmoking New Yorkers are still regularly exposed to secondhand smoke.

Nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke at home or work increases their risks of life-threatening disease. The risk of heart disease among nonsmokers who breathe secondhand smoke goes up by 25 to 30 percent and lung cancer by 20 to 30 percent.

Secondhand smoke is known to be associated with sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), respiratory problems, ear infections, and asthma attacks in infants and children.

“Recent studies find that even brief secondhand smoke exposure can cause immediate harm,” said the Otsego County Department of Health. The only way to protect nonsmokers from the dangerous chemicals in secondhand smoke is to eliminate smoking indoors.

The health effects of secondhand smoke exposure are more far reaching than was previously thought. Secondhand smoke contains more than 4,000 substances, including more than 50 cancer-causing chemicals. Nonsmokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke inhale the same toxins as smokers.

The scientific evidence is now indisputable: secondhand smoke is not a mere annoyance. It is a serious health hazard that can lead to disease in children and nonsmoking adults. Even brief exposure to secondhand smoke has immediate adverse effects on the cardiovascular system and increases risk for heart disease and lung cancer. Since the bodies of infants and children are still developing, they are especially vulnerable to the poisons in secondhand smoke.

The good news is that, unlike some public health hazards, secondhand smoke exposure is easily prevented.

Assuring smoke-free indoor environment is a proven, simple approach that prevents exposure and harm. Even the most sophisticated ventilation system cannot completely eliminate secondhand smoke exposure. Only a smoke-free environment affords full protection.

Progress over the past 20 years in clearing the air of tobacco smoke is a major public health success story.

Many thousands of cases of disease and early death have been averted and millions of dollars in health care costs saved. Sustained efforts, however, are crucial to protect New Yorkers who continue to be regularly exposed to secondhand smoke in the home, at work, and in enclosed public spaces.

To learn more about the dangers of secondhand smoke and what can be done to prevent the effects it has on people, call the Otsego County Department of Health at 607-547-4230, or visit the New York State Department of Health web site at www.nyhealth.gov.