

## Smokefree England factsheet

### SMOKEFREE IS NEEDED

From **Sunday, 1 July 2007**, virtually all enclosed public places and workplaces in England will become smokefree by law.

The introduction of smokefree environments will:

- **reduce the risks to health** from exposure to secondhand smoke
- recognise a person's **right to be protected** from harm and enjoy smokefree air
- increase the benefits of smokefree enclosed public places and workplaces for people **trying to give up smoking**
- **save thousands of lives** over the next decade by reducing both exposure to hazardous secondhand smoke and overall smoking rates

#### Health risks of secondhand smoke

In reviewing the evidence of the health risks from secondhand smoke, the Government's independent **Scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health** (SCOTH) concluded that exposure to secondhand smoke causes a range of serious medical conditions, including:

- **lung cancer**
- **heart disease**
- **asthma attacks**
- **childhood respiratory disease**
- **sudden infant death syndrome**
- **reduced lung function**

#### *Killer facts*

- *Secondhand smoke is a killer. Scientific evidence shows that there is no safe level of exposure*
- *Secondhand smoke increases the risk in non-smokers of lung cancer by 24% and heart disease by 25%*
- *Just 30 minutes exposure is enough to reduce coronary blood flow*
- *Secondhand smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals in the form of particles and gases—more than 50 are carcinogens*
- *Some groups of people, for example bar staff, are heavily exposed to secondhand smoke in their workplace*

The World Health Organisation has classified tobacco smoke as a **known human carcinogen**. The US Environmental Protection Agency classified secondhand smoke as a 'class A' human carcinogen – along with asbestos, arsenic, benzene and radon gas.

The **US Surgeon General** published a 700 page report in June 2006 on the consequences of exposure to secondhand smoke, which examined the scientific and medical evidence about secondhand smoke and health. The report found that:

- the **only way to protect non-smokers** from the dangerous chemicals in secondhand smoke is to **eliminate smoking indoors**
- exposure of adults to secondhand smoke has **immediate adverse effects** on the cardiovascular system and causes coronary heart disease and lung cancer

When publishing the report, the US Surgeon General said:

*The science is clear: secondhand smoke is not a mere annoyance, but a serious health hazard that causes premature death and disease in children and non-smoking adults.*

Although it is difficult to estimate actual numbers of deaths, in 2005 the *British Medical Journal* published research that exposure to secondhand smoke in the workplace is likely to be responsible for the deaths of more than two employed people each working day. This means 617 deaths per year, 54 of them estimated to be in the hospitality industry.

## What is secondhand smoke?

Secondhand smoke is simply **other people's tobacco smoke** and is also known as passive smoke or 'environmental' tobacco smoke.

Secondhand smoke consists of **side stream smoke** from the burning tip of the cigarette, and **mainstream smoke** exhaled by the smoker.

Side stream smoke typically makes up nearly **85% of the smoke** in a smoky environment. This type of smoke contains a much **higher concentration of toxins**, such as hydrogen cyanide, ammonia, carbon monoxide and acrolein, than mainstream smoke.

Secondhand smoke contains a cocktail of over **4,000 different chemicals**, many of which are toxic and harmful including more than 50 known carcinogens such as benzo(a)pyrene, chromium, vinyl chloride, and benzene.

### *Some of the killers in secondhand smoke*

- *Tar is known to cause both cancer and lung damage*
- *Carbon monoxide is a gas found in car exhaust fumes*
- *Benzene is found in petrol fumes and causes leukaemia*
- *Ethanol is used in anti-freeze*
- *Ammonia is used in cleaning products*
- *Formaldehyde is an embalming fluid*
- *Hydrogen cyanide is an industrial pollutant*
- *Arsenic is effectively rat poison*
- *Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) is found in diesel exhaust*

## The invisible killer

Evidence shows that **ventilation cannot control exposure to secondhand smoke**:

- We know that 85% of secondhand smoke is **invisible** and **odourless**
- Secondhand smoke is made up of gases and microscopic particles
- Research has shown that to remove the risks of secondhand smoke, an enclosed premises would need **wind tunnel**-like rates of ventilation.
- Ventilation can actually distribute secondhand smoke throughout buildings

## Evidence that smokefree benefits health

Dramatic reduction in **exposure to secondhand smoke**:

- Irish hospitality workers experienced significant reductions in the levels of both **levels of airborne pollutants** and **levels of carbon monoxide** concentrations (70% decrease) during the first 6 weeks after the introduction of a smokefree policy in Ireland
- Levels of **carbon monoxide** decreased by 45% in non-smoking Irish bar workers one year after the legislation was introduced
- Before smokefree legislation was in place, 68% of Irish workers reported having over 21 hours of **secondhand smoke exposure** per week. This changed to 70% of workers reporting no exposure to secondhand smoke at work
- In a survey of 104 hospitality workers in New York, subjects reported an 89% decrease in **exposure to secondhand smoke** at work as a result of the Clean Indoor Air Act; this was confirmed by **cotinine** tests of the workers. Cotinine is an indicator of exposure to tobacco smoke
- A report issued on the third anniversary of New York's smokefree law showed that **New Yorkers' exposure** to secondhand smoke had declined by 50% overall

Measurable **improvement to workers' health**:

- A Dundee University study showed bar workers' **lung function** increased by as much as 10% just two months after smokefree legislation was introduced. Those showing secondhand smoke-related symptoms fell from 80% to fewer than half
- The Journal of the American Medical Association documented a significant improvement documented in **respiratory health** among bartenders after the passage of the Californian smokefree workplace legislation

Marked **decrease in air pollution**:

- A Global Study of Irish Pubs found the level of **air pollution** inside Irish pubs in smokefree cities was 93% lower than the level in pubs in cities where smoking is permitted
- A Global Air Monitoring Study of 1,212 indoor workplaces in 24 different countries found that the level of **indoor pollution** was 89% lower in places that were smokefree compared to those where smoking was observed

## How can I protect myself from secondhand smoke before the legislation comes in?

Secondhand smoke is bad for health. These are some ideas on how to protect yourself and your loved ones from secondhand smoke before smokefree legislation is implemented:

- choose smokefree restaurants and pubs when you go out
- use smokefree taxis
- make your car is smokefree at all times
- help protect children by keeping their playing, sleeping and eating areas totally smokefree
- if you are a smoker, protect the health of others by always smoking outdoors

## **I'm a smoker, what should I do?**

The best way to protect your family and others from secondhand smoke is to give up smoking. For anyone considering stopping there is plenty of help and support available. Call the free **NHS Smoking Helpline on 0800 169 0 169** for practical advice, including a free information pack on how to stop smoking and the different options available.

To find about the **local NHS Stop Smoking Service** nearest you, phone the NHS Smoking Helpline free on 0800 169 0 169 or in the following ways:

- Web: [www.givingupsmoking.co.uk](http://www.givingupsmoking.co.uk)
- Mobile: text 'GIVE UP' and your full postcode to 88088
- In person: ask at your local GP practice, pharmacy or hospital