

CITY OF DUNCAN  
SECOND-HAND SMOKE HEALTH PROTECTION  
FACTS ON SECOND-HAND SMOKE

1. *Second-hand smoke accounts for more than 1,000 lung cancer and heart disease deaths among non-smokers in Canada each year.<sup>1</sup>*
2. *Two-thirds of the smoke from a burning cigarette is not inhaled by the smoker but enters the surrounding environment. The contaminated air is inhaled by anyone in that area.<sup>1</sup>*
3. *Second-hand smoke has twice as much nicotine and tar as the smoke that smokers inhale. It also has five times the carbon monoxide, which decreases the amount of oxygen in our blood.<sup>1</sup>*
4. *Second-hand smoke is poisonous and has over 4,000 chemicals, including 50 that can cause cancer. Breathing second-hand smoke can be more dangerous than inhaling smoke through a cigarette. It has twice as much nicotine and tar as the smoke that people smoking inhale and five times more carbon monoxide, a deadly gas that starves your body of oxygen.<sup>2</sup>*
5. *Other chemicals found in second-hand smoke include:*
  - *Benzo[a]pyrene found in coal tar, one of the most potent cancer-causing chemicals.*
  - *Formaldehyde used to preserve dead animals*
  - *Hydrogen cyanide used in rat poison*
  - *Ammonia used to clean floors and toilets.<sup>2</sup>*
6. *In the long term, people exposed to second-hand smoke have a greater risk of suffering from lung cancer, nasal sinus cancer, heart disease, stroke, and breathing problems, including increased coughing, wheezing, pneumonia, bronchitis, and asthma.<sup>2</sup>*
7. *People who live with someone who smokes and are exposed to tobacco smoke on a regular basis have a 30 per cent increased risk of developing lung cancer and heart disease.<sup>2</sup>*
8. *People who do not smoke will suffer from the effects of breathing second-hand smoke right away. Even as little as 8 to 20 minutes can cause physical reactions linked to heart disease and stroke, such as increased heart rate, less oxygen to the heart, and constricted blood vessels that increases blood pressure and makes the heart work harder.<sup>2</sup>*
9. *Pregnant women exposed to second-hand smoke can have a greater risk of miscarriages and babies with low birth weight.<sup>2</sup>*
10. *Infants and children are exposed to second-hand smoke in one out of five BC homes every day. These children are at higher risk of getting sick because their lungs are still developing and are more easily damaged by second-hand smoke. Infants also inhale more of the smoke because they breathe faster than adults.<sup>2</sup>*
11. *Second-hand smoke is harmful to infants and children in the following ways:*
  - *Infants who breathe second-hand smoke have a greater chance of dying from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), also known as crib death. More than three times as many infants die from second-hand smoke-related SIDS as from child abuse or homicide. For more information, see HealthLink BC File [#46 Sudden Infant Death Syndrome](#).*
  - *Children who are exposed to second-hand smoke have double the risk of getting bronchitis and pneumonia. They also get more ear infections and suffer more from chronic coughing, wheezing and breathlessness.*
  - *Second-hand smoke can affect childrens behaviour and their ability to understand and reason. Studies have shown that children who are regularly exposed to second-hand smoke score lower on tests in reading, math, logic and reasoning skills.<sup>2</sup>*
12. *For children with asthma, exposure to even small amounts of second-hand smoke can trigger an asthma attack. In rare cases, asthma can be fatal.<sup>2</sup>*
13. *Breathing second-hand smoke can increase the number of asthma attacks and can make the attacks worse in children with asthma.<sup>2</sup>*
14. *Exposing children with asthma to second-hand smoke in the home increases the number of emergency room visits and hospital stays.<sup>2</sup>*
15. *Exposure to second-hand smoke can cause children without asthma to develop it.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Health Canada Go Smokefree [www.gosmokefree.ca](http://www.gosmokefree.ca)

<sup>2</sup> HealthLinkBC [www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile30a.stm](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile30a.stm)