

Youth Exposure to Secondhand Smoke



Tobacco Prevention
and Cessation

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Smoke-free environments, including homes and vehicles, keep people from being exposed to the harmful gasses, chemicals, and particulate matter released by burning tobacco products like cigarettes and cigars. In children, secondhand smoke contributes to respiratory infections, more frequent and severe asthma attacks, ear infections, and increases the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Some groups are exposed to secondhand smoke at higher rates than others. Youth in Indiana are exposed to secondhand smoke at home and in other places. There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.^{1,3}

Secondhand Smoke Exposure at Home

- In 2024, about **1 in 4** Indiana youth reported being around secondhand smoke at home. A similar rate of youth reported exposure to secondhand smoke in vehicles.²
- Youth who lived with an adult who smokes were commonly exposed to secondhand smoke at home. About **65% of middle school students** and **70% of high school students** who lived with an adult who smokes were exposed to secondhand smoke at home.²
- More than **1 in 3 (35.0%)** middle school students and **2 in 5 (43.7%)** high school students who live with an adult who smokes were exposed to secondhand smoke on a daily basis.²

In the U.S., secondhand smoke exposure in homes and vehicles significantly declined between 2011-2018, except among non-Hispanic Black youth. Secondhand smoke exposure disproportionately affects Black communities.

Secondhand Smoke in Multi-Unit Housing

People and families who rent homes in apartment complexes and other multi-unit properties that allow smoking are exposed to more secondhand smoke than people who live in a detached home because smoke travels through air ducts, floorboards, and gaps in doors. This contributes to the unequal exposure to secondhand smoke among people and families with lower incomes. In Indiana, about 1 in 5 multi-unit housing residents are regularly exposed to secondhand smoke that enters their home from somewhere else in the building.⁴ In addition, researchers have found that children who live in multi-unit housing had levels of cotinine (a marker of recent nicotine exposure) that were 45% higher than children living in single-family homes.⁵

Fast Facts

- There is no safe level of secondhand smoke exposure
- Smoke-free environments protect people from harmful chemicals and particulates released from burning tobacco products
- Nearly **1 in 4** Hoosier youth are exposed to secondhand smoke at home and in vehicles
- About **2 in 3** Hoosier youth who live with someone who smokes are exposed to secondhand smoke at home
- Secondhand smoke can increase the risk of:
 - Lung cancer
 - Heart disease
 - Stroke
 - Respiratory illnesses
 - Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

Youth Secondhand Smoke Exposure in Public Places

In addition to being exposed to secondhand smoke at home, youth may be exposed to secondhand smoke in public places. In 2024, 31% of Indiana middle school students and 28% of Indiana high school students reported past-month secondhand smoke exposure in an indoor public places including schools, restaurants, and sports arenas. Additionally, 65% of middle school students and 38% of high school students reported past-month secondhand smoke exposure in an outdoor public place including parking lots, stadiums, and parks.²

Secondhand Aerosol from E-cigarettes

Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) are the most commonly used tobacco product among youth. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has stated that e-cigarette aerosol is **not harmless “water vapor”** and can contain harmful substances including nicotine, ultrafine particles that can be inhaled deep into the lungs, heavy metals, and cancer-causing chemicals. As e-cigarette use increased, so has exposure to secondhand aerosols.^{6,7} In 2024, approximately 30% of Indiana high school students and 25% of Indiana middle school students reported exposure to secondhand aerosols indoors. Additionally, about 27% of middle school students and 30% of high school students reported exposure to secondhand aerosols outdoors.²

What Can You Do?



Enforce no-smoking and no-vaping rules for your home and car.



If you or someone you know needs to stop using tobacco, call **1-800-QUIT-NOW** or visit **QuitNowIndiana.com** for free support.



Join a local **tobacco control coalition** in your community.



Encourage leaders to support smoke-free environments including workplaces, public places, schools, and multi-unit housing.

References:

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