

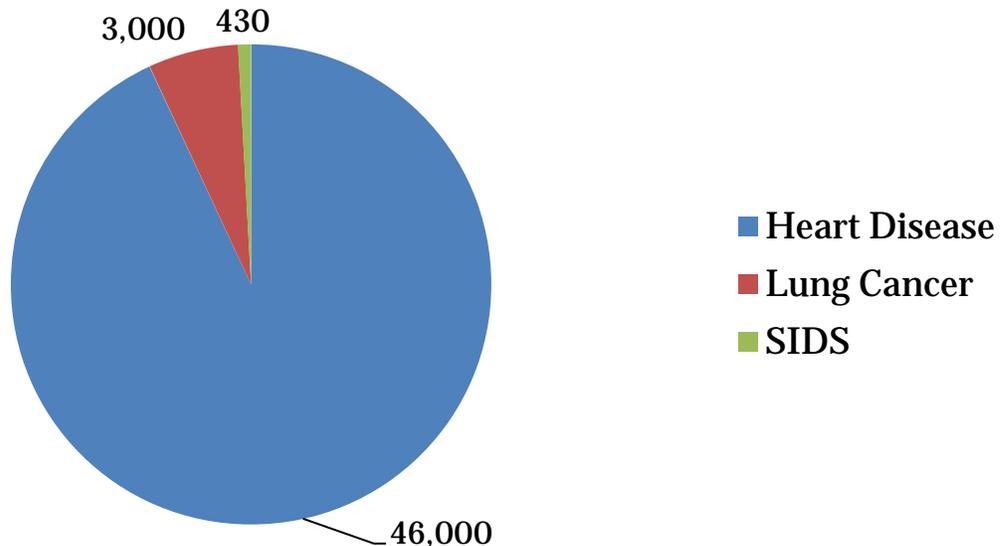
# Health Effects of Secondhand Smoke

## What is Secondhand smoke?

Secondhand smoke, or environmental tobacco smoke (ETS), is a mixture of side stream smoke and exhaled smoke in the air. Exposure to secondhand smoke is one of the leading causes of preventable death. Secondhand smoke has been shown to cause heart disease, cancer, respiratory problems and eye and nasal irritation. Exposure to secondhand smoke takes place in the home, public places, worksites and vehicles. Secondhand smoke is classified as a Group A carcinogen (cancer causing agent) under the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) carcinogen assessment guidelines. It contains over 7,000 chemicals, more than 70 carcinogens and other irritants and toxins.

- Each year in the United States, an estimated 50,000 deaths are attributable to secondhand smoke breathed by nonsmokers.
- Of these deaths, 3,000 are due to lung cancer each year with an estimated 800 from exposure at home and 2,200 from exposure in work or social settings.

## 50,000 Deaths from Secondhand Smoke



- In Indiana each year, approximately 1,200 adult nonsmokers die from exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Secondhand smoke costs Indiana approximately \$1.3 billion in excess medical expenses and premature loss of life, or about \$201 per person each year.

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## **Health Effects of Secondhand Smoke on Children**

- Children are affected more by secondhand smoke than adults because their bodies are still developing and secondhand smoke can hinder the growth and function of their lungs.
- Children and infants exposed to secondhand smoke in the home have dramatically higher levels of respiratory symptoms, respiratory tract infections, and slower lung development.
- Hundreds of thousands of lung and bronchial infections are caused by secondhand smoke each year.
- Secondhand smoke exposure increases the number of new asthma cases and worsens asthmatic symptoms.
- Secondhand smoke exposure is strongly linked with ear infections.

## **Protecting Your Children from Secondhand Smoke**

The U.S. Surgeon General says there is no safe level of secondhand smoke exposure. Smoke-free environments are the most effective way to fighting exposure to secondhand smoke.

- Pledge not to smoke in your home and car and do not allow family and visitors to do so. Infants and toddlers are especially vulnerable to the health risks from secondhand smoke.
- Do not allow childcare providers or others who work in your home to smoke.
- Until you can quit smoking, smoke outside. Moving to another room will not eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Smokers trying to quit smoking are more successful in quitting if they have a smoke-free home.

Smoke-free air policies are growing in Indiana. Many communities are educating the public of the dangers of secondhand smoke and the need for smoke-free air policy.

*For more information about smoke-free air policies, see additional ISDH-TPC Fact Sheets [here](#).*

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