



Columbia County Department of Health

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Secondhand Smoke Kills

Secondhand smoke is nearly invisible and some people are even accustomed to its presence. Don't let yourself be fooled. Secondhand smoke is deadly, killing more than 3,000 New Yorkers each year. Nationally, about 50,000 nonsmoking adults die due to exposure to secondhand smoke.

"If you are around secondhand smoke, you are actually breathing in 4,000 substances, 69 of which are known to cause cancer," said Nancy Winch Public Health Director of the Columbia County Health Department. "There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke."

While exposure to secondhand smoke is harmful for healthy adults, it's even more dangerous for pregnant women, babies and children. A pregnant woman who is exposed to secondhand smoke has a greater chance of having a more difficult delivery, a smaller than average baby or a sick baby.

"Research shows that smoking by pregnant women and exposure to cigarette smoke is a major cause of miscarriages, stillbirths and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)," Ms Winch said.

Secondhand smoke also causes a host of problems for babies and children because their lungs are still developing. If their parents smoke, they are more likely to have lower respiratory tract infections, such as pneumonia and bronchitis. They are also more likely to suffer from middle

ear infections, sore throats and colds. Secondhand smoke causes children with asthma or allergies to have longer and more severe attacks.

To protect yourself and those around you:

- Don't allow smoking in your home or car, especially if pregnant women, infants, young children or people with health and breathing problems are present. This includes family members, visitors, babysitters and anyone else who may work in your home.
- Make sure that children learn and play in smoke-free environments, including playgrounds, parks, beaches, community events and fairs.
- If you smoke, try to quit. If you feel you must smoke, protect the people around you by not smoking around pregnant women, infants, young children or people with breathing problems.
- Keep your home smoke-free by going outside to smoke. If you feel you must smoke indoors, limit smoking to a single room with an open window.
- Don't smoke in a car if there are others with you.

If you are ready to quit smoking, call the New York State Smokers' Quitline at 1-866-NYQUITS (1-866-697-8487) or go to www.nysmokefree.com to obtain free, confidential services to help you become smoke-free.

For more information about the dangers of secondhand smoke, call the Columbia County Health Department at (518) 828-3358 or visit the New York State Department of Health web site at www.nyhealth.gov/prevention/tobacco_control.