

# SECONDHAND SMOKE & TOBACCO USE



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## What is secondhand smoke?

Secondhand smoke is the smoke that comes from a person's cigarette, pipe, cigar, or other lighted tobacco product.

When you smoke around other people - in the home, at work, or in the car - you expose them to secondhand smoke. Smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals, at least 70 of which are known to cause cancer.

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## Does secondhand smoke cause health problems?

Secondhand smoke causes death and a number of serious health problems. Each year it kills more than 41,000 people in the United States.

People exposed to secondhand smoke are at an increased risk for:

- Coronary heart disease
- Lung cancer
- Stroke
- Asthma attacks
- Worsened lung function, bronchitis, pneumonia, and ear infections (in children)
- Low infant birth weight and sudden infant death

Secondhand smoke not only harms humans, but pets as well. They can experience secondhand smoke-related cancer and heart problems just like humans.

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## How will the health of those around me benefit if I quit smoking?

When you quit smoking your health will immediately begin to improve as will the health of people exposed to your secondhand smoke. So quitting is a win for you and a win for them. When a person is no longer exposed to secondhand smoke they are likely to experience:

- Improved lung function
- Reduced heart attack risk
- Reduced respiratory disease risk
- Fewer respiratory disease symptoms

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## I want to quit using tobacco — how do I get started?

- Talk to your VA health care provider about cessation medications and counseling to treat your tobacco use.
- Call VA's tobacco quitline at **1-855-QUIT-VET** (1-855-784-8838) Monday–Friday. Available in English & Spanish.
- Sign up for VA's SmokefreeVET text messaging program — text the word **VET** to **47848** (manda **VETesp** al **47848** para ayuda en español) or visit [smokefree.gov/VET](https://smokefree.gov/VET).

