

# Second-Hand Smoke – The Consequences

by Connie Townsend, M.D.

For years the major complaints people had about second-hand smoke were that it smelt bad — and made their eyes itch and their clothes turn yellow. In recent years concern mounted over the bad effects it could have on people's health, especially for those with allergies or other medical conditions. Now evidence has accumulated to show that second-hand smoke definitely increases the risk of lung cancer among non-smokers consistently exposed to it.

What is second-hand smoke? It is the smoke from a cigarette which is inhaled by those around smokers, rather than by the smokers themselves.

There are two kinds. One is the smoke which the smokers exhale after taking a puff — some of the harmful chemicals have been removed by the cigarette filter and the smokers' lungs. The other smoke comes off the burning end of the cigarette and, because it is unfiltered, has even more poisons than the smoke the smokers themselves inhale. Fortunately, this smoke is diluted by the environmental air before the non-smoker inhales it. However, the results of some recent studies of non-smoking wives of smoking husbands have shown that they have a higher incidence of lung cancer due to second-hand smoke. Many people are continually exposed to second-hand

smoke in other situations, such as the workplace, and are therefore probably also at increased risk of developing this disease. Since only about 5% of lung cancer patients have a chance of cure, this is a serious health problem.

Unfortunately, lung cancer is not the only possible effect of second-hand smoke. The smoke permanently scars some of the small airways in non-

smokers' lungs, which can reduce lung capacity to the point that more effort has to be put into getting the oxygen the body needs. This can have serious consequences for those with respiratory or heart problems. As well it may lead to lung disorders in later life among presently healthy individuals. Damage has even been found in the lungs

of children of smokers, so it is not surprising that they have been found to have more respiratory illnesses than the children of non-smokers.

Even more depressing are the results of an unusual form of second-hand smoking. This is the damage caused to the unborn children of smoking mothers. Pregnant women who smoke have a higher rate of spontaneous abortion (miscarriage), still-birth, premature birth, and babies who weigh less at birth. Their children have been shown to have slower mental and physical development in the first decade of life compared to children whose mothers did not smoke during pregnancy.

One of the harmful ingredients of cigarette smoke is carbon monoxide, which is preferred to oxygen by the

red blood cells. Prolonged exposure to smoke in closed environments such as a car or small room leads to oxygen starvation, which can cause both smokers and non-smokers to slow down, become drowsy and have slower reaction times — with obvious possible results.

People with allergies can suffer severe reactions — asthma, hay fever, headaches, coughs and wheezes, sore, dry eyes — when exposed to second-hand smoke. While not having such strong reactions, non-allergic people can also be irritated by tobacco smoke.

So there are the effects of second-hand smoke: increased risk of lung cancer, health risks to those with respiratory or circulatory disorders, ill effects to children, severe reactions among those allergic to tobacco, and irritation and annoyance of others. Fewer and fewer people are willing to suffer from these effects and support the establishment of non-smoking environments in their homes, public places

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## Winnie's Scribbles

By Winnie Campbell

Visitors at Philip and Brenda Birch's over the holidays were Bill Duncan, from Oakville and Eleanor Green, Dave and Pat Duncan from Prince George, B.C., Brian and Lenore Duncan and family from Wawa, and Bill and Lydia Duncan from Sault Ste. Marie.

Visitors at Bruce and Terry Thomson's were Jean and Cathy Thomson from Calgary, and Moir and Carol Thomson from Killarney Manitoba.

Visitors at Edith and Geoff Birch's were Marlene and daughters Alana and Kristine from Thunder Bay.

Mr. and Mrs. Archer and family are visiting mom McLellan and relations.

Get well in the hospital to Inez McCuaig, Mr. Smart and Mrs. Gail Welbourne.

Mrs. Retta Pearson has returned from visiting relations in Winnipeg. Mrs. Etta Gray visited relations in Thunder Bay. Alice Sparkes has returned from holidays in Acapulco.

Mr. and Mrs. Noonan attended the wedding of their daughter Donna in Montreal on Jan. 10. Also visiting them for Christmas were David and Ann.

Congratulations to Mr. Art Le Blanc on his retirement from the CPR - 45 years of service. His fellow workers and family were on hand when he completed his last shift on Friday, Jan. 9, 1987. He received many congratulatory messages and gifts.

Afterwards, there was a family supper held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Cebrario.

The lucky winners of the Chimo Home Bingo were Bonnie Scott and Kay Thorsteinson and Betty Tate.

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