

**Secondhand smoke (SHS) is the toxic mixture of smoke that comes from a burning tobacco product, such as a cigarette, cigar, or pipe, and smoke exhaled by the smoker.<sup>1</sup>**

- There is no safe level of SHS—it is dangerous to anyone who breathes it in.
- SHS contains over 7,000 poisonous chemicals, and at least 250 have been shown to damage your health.
- The smoke can linger in the air for several hours after someone smokes.
- Your body can suffer harmful effects even after breathing SHS for a short period of time.
- Repeated exposure to SHS can cause serious health issues in non-smokers like lung cancer and cardiovascular disease.

#### Key Points:

- No level of SHS is safe to breathe.
- Children and babies are especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of SHS.
- Eliminating smoking in indoor spaces is the only way to fully protect non-smokers from SHS exposure.
- About 30% of non-smoking CT adults and 38% of youth were recently exposed to SHS in a public place.

**SHS is especially dangerous for children, babies, and women who are pregnant. A few of the more serious health effects include:<sup>1</sup>**

- SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome). Babies whose moms smoke while pregnant or who are exposed to SHS after birth are more likely to die from SIDS.



- In 2012, among women in Connecticut who were in their childbearing years (aged 18-44 years), 16.8% were current cigarette smokers.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2011, among women in Connecticut who gave birth, 4.6% reported smoking during pregnancy.<sup>3</sup>
- Between 2005 and 2011 there were 122 SIDS cases in Connecticut;<sup>3</sup> it is estimated that 9 or 10 of these deaths can be attributed to exposure to SHS toxins.<sup>4</sup>

- Severe asthma. SHS causes kids who already have asthma to get more frequent and severe attacks.

- Data from the 2013 Connecticut Youth Tobacco Survey estimated that, of the 10.5% of middle and high school students who reported having an episode of asthma or an asthma attack in the past 12 months, 48.9% were living with a smoker or had been exposed to SHS at home or in a car during the seven days before the survey.

- Breathing problems. Children whose parents smoke around them get bronchitis and pneumonia more often. SHS also causes lung problems, including coughing, too much phlegm, wheezing, and breathlessness among school-aged children.

**Eliminating smoking in indoor spaces is the only way to fully protect non-smokers from SHS exposure. Separating smokers from non-smokers in the same air space (like “no smoking” sections in restaurants or casinos), cleaning the air, opening windows, or ventilating buildings does not completely get rid of SHS.<sup>1</sup>**

**In 2004, Connecticut enacted the Clean Indoor Air Act. This statute prohibits smoking in many workplaces and in restaurants and bars. Despite this law, more work needs to be done:**

- Data from the 2010 Connecticut Adult Tobacco Survey estimated that, in the seven days prior to the survey, 39.4% of non-smoking adults were exposed to SHS—17.0% were exposed in their workplace, 4.5% at home, 7.1% in a vehicle, and 30.3% in a public place.
- Data from the 2013 Connecticut Youth Tobacco Survey estimated that 31.8% of middle and high school students live with someone who smokes cigarettes, cigars, or pipes. And, in the seven days prior to the survey, 18.3% were at home when someone smoked a tobacco product; 20.5% were in a vehicle with someone who was smoking; 21.7% breathed the smoke from someone who was smoking a tobacco product at their school; and 38.0% were exposed to SHS in an indoor or outdoor public place.

## **For Further Information**

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## **References**

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1. Tobacco Control Research Branch of the National Cancer Institute; <http://smokefree.gov>.
2. Results from the Connecticut Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey; 2012.
3. CT DPH; Office of Vital Records; Registration Reports; 2011.
4. CDC, MCH SAMMEC; Health Outcomes Report; <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/sammec>.