

# Youth Exposure to Secondhand Smoke



Tobacco Prevention and Cessation

October 2021

Smoke-free environments, including homes and vehicles, keep people from being exposed to the harmful gasses, chemicals, and particulate matter released by burning tobacco products like cigarettes and cigars. In children, secondhand smoke contributes to respiratory infections, more frequent and severe asthma attacks, ear infections, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Inequalities linked to race, ethnicity, gender, income level, and sexual orientation are linked to disparities in secondhand smoke exposure. Many Hoosier youth are exposed to secondhand smoke at home and in other places. There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

## Indiana Youth and Secondhand Smoke

- In 2018, about 1 in 4 Indiana youth reported being around secondhand smoke at home. A similar rate of youth reported exposure to secondhand smoke in vehicles.
- Youth who lived with an adult who smokes were commonly exposed to secondhand smoke at home. About 54% of middle school students and 49% of high school students who lived with an adult who smokes were exposed to secondhand smoke at home.
- Youth who were exposed to secondhand smoke at home generally report daily exposure.

## Secondhand Smoke in Multi-Unit Housing

People and families who rent homes in apartment complexes and other multi-unit properties that allow smoking are exposed to more secondhand smoke than people who live in a detached home because smoke travels through air ducts, floorboards, and gaps in doors. This contributes to the unequal exposure to secondhand smoke among people and families with lower incomes. In Indiana, nearly 19% of multi-unit housing residents reported exposure to secondhand smoke, compared to less than 14% of single-unit occupants. In addition, researchers have found that children who live in multi-unit housing had levels of cotinine (a marker of recent nicotine exposure) that were 45% higher than children living in single-family homes.

## Fast Facts

There is no safe level of secondhand smoke exposure.

Smoke-free environments protect people from harmful chemicals and particulates released from burning tobacco products.

About **1 in 4** Hoosier youth are exposed to secondhand smoke at home and in vehicles.

**More than half** of Hoosier youth who live with a smoker are exposed to secondhand smoke at home.

Most youth who are exposed to secondhand smoke at home are exposed daily.

Secondhand smoke can cause:

- Lung cancer
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Respiratory illnesses
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

## Youth Secondhand Smoke Exposure in Public Places

In addition to being exposed to secondhand smoke at home, youth may be exposed to secondhand smoke in public places. In 2018, 31% of Indiana middle school students and 34% of Indiana high school students reported past-week secondhand smoke exposure in an indoor or outdoor public place.

## Secondhand Aerosol from E-cigarettes

In recent years, use of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) has dramatically increased. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has stated that e-cigarette aerosol is not harmless “water vapor” and can contain harmful substances including nicotine, ultrafine particles that can be inhaled deep into the lungs, heavy metals, and cancer-causing chemicals. In 2017, 1 in 4 (25.6%) youth nationwide reported being exposed to secondhand e-cigarette aerosol in a public place.

## What Can You Do?



Enforce no-smoking and no-vaping rules for your home and car.



If you or someone you know needs to stop using tobacco, call **1-800-QUIT-NOW** or visit [QuitNowIndiana.com](http://QuitNowIndiana.com) for free support.



Encourage leaders to support smoke-free environments including workplaces, public places, schools, and multi-unit housing.



Join a local [tobacco control coalition](#) in your community.