

# Traditional Tobacco and Commercial Tobacco Fact Sheet



Traditional tobacco is used in small amounts in a variety of ways such as tobacco ties, prayer sticks and smoking in a sacred pipe. In recreational use and misuse, tobacco is misused through smoking cigarettes, chewing tobacco or snuff. Unlike traditional tobacco, commercial tobacco contains additional chemicals that are harmful. Aboriginal Peoples and Elders who live in a traditional way, believe that misusing tobacco shows a lack of respect for the sacred medicine's spiritual and traditional purposes.

Recreational use and misuse of commercial tobacco is addictive. As with any addictive substance, commercial tobacco is often used as a way to cope with stress. Aboriginal Peoples experience stressors such as poverty, trauma, incarceration, and abuse in high numbers. Colonialism, discrimination and residential schools contribute to the high level of recreational tobacco use in Aboriginal communities across Canada. Over half of Aboriginal adults are smokers. This is twice as high as in the general population.

The cost of smoking also affects the ability to buy healthy food, be involved in healthy recreation etc. If 1 person smokes 1 pack a day for 1 year, the cost is about \$4,000. For an online calculator to estimate smoking costs:  
[www.quit4life.com/calc\\_e.asp](http://www.quit4life.com/calc_e.asp)



## Things People Can Do

Here are some things you can do to help reduce young children's and pregnant women's exposure to second-hand smoke:

1. Learn more about traditional and commercial use of tobacco.
2. Discuss smoking openly.
3. Help people understand the impact of smoke on children's health.
4. Politely ask people not to smoke around children and pregnant women.
5. Keep a smoke-free home.
6. Put a smoke-free home sign on your front door.
7. Smoke outside.
8. Remove your coat and wash your hands after smoking, before playing with children.
9. Let friends and family know that they are expected to smoke outside.
10. Provide a comfortable place for visitors to smoke outdoors.
11. Thank visitors for smoking outside.
12. Meet in an outdoor or non-smoking location.
13. When visiting people who smoke, call ahead so they can air out the house.
14. Be a role model and do not smoke.
15. Treat yourself as sacred.



# Second-hand Smoke

## What is Second-hand Smoke?

Second-hand smoke has more than 4,000 chemicals. They include nicotine, carbon monoxide, ammonia, formaldehyde, dioxins, and furan. More than 50 cancer-causing chemicals are in second-hand smoke. They include arsenic, asbestos, benzene and vinyl chloride.

## What are the Risks of Second-hand Smoke?

Each year in Canada, more than 800 people die from second-hand smoke. It also increases the risk of:

- Lung cancer
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Breast cancer
- Cervical cancer
- Miscarriage

## What is the impact of regular exposure to second-hand smoke on children?

Children exposed to second-hand smoke have more health and developmental problems including:

- Bronchitis
- Croup
- Pneumonia
- Asthma
- Sudden infant death syndrome
- Ear infections
- Lower test scores in math, reading and logic

## Why is second-hand smoke so harmful to children?

- Children's lungs are still growing.
- Children breathe in more air for their body weight than adults.
- Children tend to be more active than adults.
- Children's immune systems are not as developed as adults.
- Children are less able to leave places where there is second-hand smoke.



## **How does Second-hand Smoke affect Pregnancy?**

- The chemicals in tobacco smoke can move from the mother into the growing baby.
- Nicotine raises the unborn baby's heart rate. It slows the development of the lungs and respiratory tract.
- Carbon monoxide gas can reduce the unborn baby's oxygen supply, causing a lower birth weight.
- In the last trimester of pregnancy, the unborn baby starts to get ready to breathe. The chest muscles move in and out as if the unborn baby were breathing. This can stop for long periods of time after the unborn baby is exposed to second-hand smoke.
- Second-hand smoke is linked to early birth (premature babies) and miscarriage.

## **Third-hand Smoke**

Third-hand smoke is made up of the toxins that linger even after the person who smokes puts out the cigarette, cigar, or pipe. Third-hand smoke gets trapped in hair, skin, walls, fabric, carpet, furniture, and toys. It builds up over time. We don't know how long these chemicals can last indoors. It depends on how much they are absorbed by soft items, such as fabric and foam. It also depends on how well they stick to surfaces. Some of the chemicals can still be measured for months or even years, especially if heavy smoking happened in the room or house. The chemicals can be measured long after the smell has gone away. Third-hand smoke gets into household dust. Babies can swallow this dust when they crawl on floors or put their hands into their mouths. Babies can take in 20 times more third-hand smoke than adults.

*Sources: Canadian Lung Association, Program Training and Consultation Centre, and Health Canada.*

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