

Commonly Asked Questions

What is second-hand smoke?

Second-hand smoke harm occurs when you are exposed to tobacco being smoked near you. Second-hand smoke comes from the burning end of the cigarette and the smoke breathed out by smoker.

At least 325 New Zealanders die each year due to of exposure to second-hand smoke.^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}

Second-hand smoke (SHS) contains a lethal mix of chemicals such as arsenic, hydrogen cyanide, ammonia and carbon monoxide. At least 98 of these chemicals have been identified as poisonous.^{1,2}

Second-hand smoke is the leading environmental cause of death in this country.³ There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke and those who are exposed may suffer from many of the same diseases as regular smokers, such as coronary heart disease, lung cancer, stroke, eye and nasal irritation and nasal sinus cancer.⁴

Children are our most valuable asset and are particularly vulnerable to second-hand smoke due to their smaller lungs, higher respiratory rates and immature immune systems.⁵ Infants in particular ingest second-hand smoke from fabrics and other surfaces, as well as inhaling it.⁶ Children need to be protected from second-hand smoke as much as possible as it can cause:

- middle ear infections (including glue ear/otitis media)
- lower respiratory illnesses (including croup, bronchitis, bronchiolitis and pneumonia)
- the onset of asthma and worsening of asthmatic symptoms
- reduced lung growth
- sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI)
- meningococcal disease
- and may effect a child's learning development and behaviour.

Exposure to second-hand smoke during pregnancy can reduce foetal growth and create complications.

Why smokefree cars?

The New Zealand Government recognises that second-hand smoke continues to impose health risks on non-smokers, and that children in particular are vulnerable to being exposed to second-hand smoke in situations outside their control.

1 <http://smokefree.org.nz/second-hand-smoke> downloaded 26.11.2014

2 Talhout, R., Schulz, T., Florek, E., van Benthem, J., Wester, P., Opperhuizen, A. 2011. Hazardous compounds in tobacco smoke. *Int J Environ Res Public Health* 8, 613-628.

3 Ministry of Health. The smoke is clearing: Anniversary report 2005. Ministry of Health. Wellington. December 2005. Accessed December 15, 2005. [http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/0/7EC01E1971949178CC2570D20019E782/\\$File/SmokeClearing.pdf](http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/0/7EC01E1971949178CC2570D20019E782/$File/SmokeClearing.pdf).

4 US Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coordinating Center for Health Promotion, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health. Atlanta GA. 2006. Accessed March 9, 2015. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/secondhandsmoke/fullreport.pdf>.

5 Dozor, A.J., Amler, R.W. 2013. Children's Environmental Health. *J Pediatr* 162, 6-7 e2.

6 Matt, G., Quintana, P., Hovell, M., Bernert, J., Song, S., Novianti, N., Juarez, T., Floro, J., Gehrman, C., Garcia, M., Larson, S. 2004. Households contaminated by environmental tobacco smoke: sources of infant exposures. *Tob Control* 13, 29-37.

Smoking around children and young people is harmful. They will be exposed to second-hand smoke, and children who breathe in second-hand smoke are more likely to develop illnesses such as chest infections, glue ear and asthma. Exposure to second-hand smoke increases the risk of sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI).

Research shows that young people who have friends / family / whānau who smoke and who are exposed to second-hand smoke are more likely to become vulnerable to starting smoking.⁷

Children and young people are often not able to move away from second-hand smoke. Opening or winding down a window will not remove all of the poisons. The poisons will linger long after the smoke and smell have disappeared.

There is NO safe amount of second-hand smoke. New Zealand research indicates that second-hand smoke in a car can be as bad as a smoky pub even with the car windows down.⁷

Besides second-hand smoke, when they are in cars where there has been smoking, children are exposed to third-hand smoke, which is the second-hand smoke that sticks to surfaces and is released.⁸ Poisons from second-hand smoke can linger in dust and on surfaces for days, weeks or even months after smoking has taken place.⁹

Who else has smokefree cars?

Laws prohibiting smoking in vehicles carrying children have been adopted in; Australia all states, Canada in most provinces, United States in 6 states, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Cyprus, Mauritius and Puerto Rico.

Smokefree cars are being considered in Finland, Ireland, Israel, Netherlands and Taiwan.

See Appendix 2. Smokefree Cars an International Overview

Smoking in cars and road safety

Smoking in cars creates a driver distraction.

The acts of looking for, reaching for, even rolling a cigarette and then lighting cigarettes can cause the driver to be distracted. A burning cigarette that has fallen into a drivers lap can lead to panic like reactions.

Cigarette butts thrown out of a car window can pose a serious fire threat.

You can't tell me what to do in my own car

When it is a health issue and a road safety issue the New Zealand Government has a responsibility to protect the public. We already legislate around driver licencing, car registrations, warrants of fitness, seat belts, child restraint car seats and cell phones.¹⁰

As a driver distraction smoking in cars can be compared to using a cell phone while driving which is banned in New Zealand.

What about enforcement?

Roadside checks can be done during the over three million¹¹ annual routine stops by police.

7 Edwards, R., Wilson, N., Pierse, N. 2006. Highly hazardous air quality associated with smoking in cars: New Zealand pilot study. *New Zealand Medical Journal* 119, U2294.

8 Bahl, V., Jacob, P., 3rd, Havel, C., Schick, S.F., Talbot, P. 2014. Thirdhand cigarette smoke: factors affecting exposure and remediation. *PLoS One* 9, e108258.

9 Ferrante, G., Simoni, M., Cibella, F., Ferrara, F., Liotta, G., Malizia, V., Corsello, G., Viegi, G., La Grutta, S. 2013. Third-hand smoke exposure and health hazards in children. *Monaldi Arch Chest Dis* 79, 38-43.

10 Chapman S. The future of smoke-free legislation. Will cars and homes follow bans on smoking in public spaces? Downloaded 21 January 2015. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1976495/>

Smokefree car laws are effective. The Canadian experience indicates that there has been a reduction of exposure to second-hand smoke in cars after legislation.¹² Research shows that after a smokefree cars law has been introduced it generally becomes self-enforcing.¹³

More than 80% of New Zealand's adult population are smokefree, most smokers are considerate and don't smoke around children or in their cars, so this would mean that there would be a minimal level of enforcement.

Smokefree cars would infringe on the rights of smokers

This argument assumes that the rights of an adult to smoke around a child outweigh the rights of a child to breathe clean air that won't make them sick.

Surely the relatively minor inconvenience the ban would cause smokers – having to smoke before or after a journey with children, or to pull over on long journeys just as they would if they needed a break or refreshments – is worth it to protect children from illnesses that can result from second-hand smoke?

If the government starts telling parents they can't smoke around children, soon they will telling them what they can feed them

Even though too much salt, sugar and fat is bad for children, a certain amount of each is actually necessary for their health.

This is not true with second-hand smoke, which is never good for children. It is therefore much clearer to say exposing a child to second-hand smoke in cars is wrong, and that we have a duty to do what we can to prevent it.

For many years New Zealand has waged expensive educational campaigns urging smokers not to expose children to tobacco smoke in vehicles and homes. While many smokers observe this advice, ultimately these voluntary measures fail to protect all children. A recent University of Otago Wellington Study found that a well-resourced local smokefree cars campaign was only successful in halving the number of people smoking in cars carrying children.¹⁴ The researchers concluded that achieving fully smokefree vehicles would require national-level smokefree vehicle legislation.

11 Radio New Zealand. Police stops to include vehicle checks. Radio New Zealand. Wellington. February 12, 2015. Accessed March 9, 2015. <http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/235954/police-stops-to-include-vehicle-checks>.

12 Nguyen, H.V. 2013. Do smoke-free car laws work? Evidence from a quasi-experiment. *J Health Econ* 32, 138-148.

13 Susan R. Weisman, Public Health Law Center, *Kids, Cars and Cigarettes: Policy Options for Smoke-Free Vehicles* (2010). http://publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/phlc-policybrief-kidscarssmoke-2010_0.pdf

14 Thomson, G, Oliver J, Wilson N. Trends in smoking in vehicles at a local community level: Wainuiomata 2005-2013. *New Zealand Medical Journal*. 2014; 127(1397).