A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Avoiding Secondhand Smoke

Disparities in Nonsmokers' Exposure to Secondhand Smoke — United States, 1999-2012
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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke. Exposure to secondhand smoke causes serious health problems in both children and adult nonsmokers.

Dr. David Homa is a researcher with CDC's Office on Smoking and Health. He's joining us today to discuss the health hazards posed by exposure to secondhand smoke. Welcome to the show, David.

[Dr. Homa] Thank you. Great to be here.

[Dr. Gaynes] David, let's start with how many people are exposed to secondhand smoke?

[Dr. Homa] About 58 million nonsmoking Americans are exposed to secondhand smoke.

[Dr. Gaynes] Well, what health problems can be caused by secondhand smoke?

[Dr. Homa] Well, we know that secondhand smoke causes health problems in infants, children, and nonsmoking adults. In infants and children it can cause sudden infant death syndrome, lung infections, ear infections, and asthma attacks. In nonsmoking adults, it can cause heart disease, lung cancer, and stroke.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are any groups more likely to be exposed to secondhand smoke?

[Dr. Homa] Yes there are. In the U.S., children 3 to 11 years old, blacks, people who live below the poverty level, and people who rent their housing are more likely to be exposed to secondhand smoke.

[Dr. Gaynes] Do smoking and nonsmoking sections in public places help prevent exposure to secondhand smoke?

[Dr. Homa] Well, we know that only completely eliminating smoking indoors can fully protect nonsmokers from the effects of secondhand smoke. Doing things, such as opening windows, running fans, using air fresheners, cleaning the air, or separating smokers from nonsmokers cannot totally eliminate exposure.

[Dr. Gaynes] David, what strategies are most effective in preventing health hazards from secondhand smoke?

[Dr. Homa] The best way to reduce harm from secondhand smoke is to reduce smoking. Other proven methods that can reduce exposure are 100 percent smoke-free laws that cover private worksites, restaurants, bars, and casinos, smoke-free policies in multi-unit housing, and people can make their homes and vehicles smoke-free.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about secondhand smoke?

[Dr. Homa] People can go to cdc.gov/tobacco.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, David. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. David Homa about the dangers of secondhand smoke.

Eliminating smoking in indoor spaces, such as private worksites, restaurants, bars, and casinos, fully protects nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke in these environments. In addition, everyone can protect their family and friends by making their homes and vehicles smoke-free.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC.*

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.