



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Smoke in Your Eyes

State and Local Comprehensive Smoke-Free Laws for Worksites, Restaurants, and Bars
— United States, 2015

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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.

Even if you've never smoked a cigarette in your life, you could still suffer the consequences of tobacco use. Inhaling smoke from someone else's cigarette can have immediate, harmful effects on the body.

Michael Tynan is a researcher with CDC's Office on Smoking and Health. He's joining us today by phone to discuss the dangers of secondhand smoke. Welcome to the show, Michael.

[Michael Tynan] Thank you. I'm happy to be here.

[Dr. Gaynes] Michael, how much secondhand tobacco smoke is dangerous?

[Michael Tynan] We know there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

[Dr. Gaynes] What health problems can be attributed to secondhand smoke?

[Michael Tynan] Secondhand smoke causes stroke, lung cancer, and heart attacks in non-smoking adults, and respiratory problems, asthma attacks, ear infections, and sudden infant death syndrome in children and infants.

[Dr. Gaynes] Michael, how many people in the U.S. are exposed to secondhand smoke?

[Michael Tynan] So, about one in four non-smokers, which is 58 million people in the U.S., are still exposed to secondhand smoke. We also know it affects two in every five children in the U.S. We also know that certain groups are more likely to be exposed. This includes children, African Americans, those living below the poverty level, and people who rent their homes. Exposure is also higher among employees in the hospitality and gaming industries.

[Dr. Gaynes] How many states have effective smoking restrictions in public places?

[Michael Tynan] Today, 27 states, D.C., and over 800 communities have implemented comprehensive, smoke-free laws that prohibit smoking in all indoor areas of work places, restaurants, and bars. And nearly 60 percent of the population live in a state or community with a comprehensive smoke-free law. However, we know regional gaps remain in smoke-free protections. For example, no state in the southeast has a statewide, comprehensive smoke-free law in effect.

[Dr. Gaynes] Well, aside from the obvious benefit to eliminating secondhand smoke exposure, are there any unexpected benefits from enacting smoking restrictions in public places?

[Michael Tynan] Yes. There are many benefits. Smoke-free laws help smokers quit, they change social norms regarding the acceptability of smoking, they prevent youth and young adults from starting to smoke in the first place, and they reduce heart attack and asthma hospitalizations among nonsmokers.

[Dr. Gaynes] What can people do to protect themselves from secondhand smoke in public places?

[Michael Tynan] Because there's no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke, people should avoid places that allow smoking indoors. We know, for example, that separating smokers from nonsmokers and ventilating buildings is not an effective way to eliminate secondhand smoke exposure. They can also adopt smoke-free rules in their homes and vehicles to protect all nonsmokers, particularly children, from this known and preventable health hazard.

[Dr. Gaynes] Michael, where can listeners get more information about secondhand smoke?

[Michael Tynan] People can go to cdc.gov/tobacco.

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

Remember, there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. However, many states and communities are not covered by smoke-free laws, which are critical to protect nonsmokers from the dangers of secondhand smoke in the places they work, live, and gather.

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.