

Thirdhand Smoke in Housing

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What is thirdhand smoke?

Thirdhand smoke is a term used that refers to the residual contamination and pollutants that settle indoors from smoking. Thirdhand smoke lingers long after the act of smoking. It covers furniture, walls, floors, even our hair and clothes. These particles are hazardous to our health - for example, when nicotine reacts with indoor air pollutants, such as nitrous acid, it can form cancer-causing compounds.

How can thirdhand smoke impact residents in multi-unit housing?

Thirdhand smoke is harmful to babies and young children as they tend to crawl on the floor and touch more surfaces. Babies and children who are exposed to these harmful particles are more likely to be diagnosed with bronchitis, pneumonia, ear infections, and asthma.

Simply smoking tobacco products or using smokeless tobacco products like vapes in a room with a fan or open window is not enough to prevent thirdhand smoke from settling indoors. Folks who move into an apartment or housing that had a previous smoker in it are at larger risk of health issues without even having to smoke themselves. Similarly, having neighbors who smoke in the same building can impact health. For this reason, it is important to push for anti-smoking policies in multi-unit dwellings, such as apartment complexes.

How to adopt policies in housing units?

Currently, CA Civil Code Section 1948.5-2011 (SB 332) allows landlords to prohibit smoking of tobacco products in all indoor areas of their buildings and even on their outdoor property. Individuals can work to engage residents, building managers, property owners, and policy makers to adopt smoke-free multi-unit housing policies. As a smoke-free housing policy begins to develop it is important to have resources available for tenants who smoke and may become interested in quitting. [Kick It California](#) is a free program that helps Californians quit smoking, vaping, and smokeless tobacco.