



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THIRDHAND SMOKE IN MULTI-UNIT HOUSING

## Q WHAT IS THIRDHAND SMOKE?

Thirdhand smoke is the residue from tobacco smoke that remains in the environment after smoking has occurred. In the home, thirdhand smoke can settle on walls, carpets, countertops, tile, upholstery, and other surfaces.<sup>1</sup> Thirdhand smoke can be ingested, absorbed, or inhaled as the chemicals get released back into the air.<sup>2</sup> In multi-unit housing, it can be found in units where smoking occurred, as well as units into which smoke drifted from another unit.

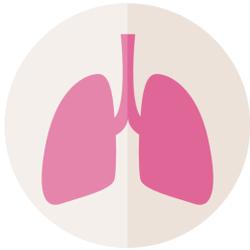
Thirdhand smoke cannot be completely eliminated with normal household cleaning or by airing out rooms, opening windows, using fans or air conditioners, or confining smoking to only certain indoor areas.<sup>1</sup> It builds up over time and remains in the home long after the smoking occurred.



## Q WHAT ARE THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF THIRDHAND SMOKE?

Exposure to thirdhand smoke can have harmful health effects, including:

- Higher risk of heart disease, stroke, and other smoking-related diseases<sup>1</sup>
- Release of particles that could contribute to cancer and respiratory problems<sup>4</sup>
- Linked to diabetes, lung and liver damage, slow healing of wounds, and hyperactivity in mice<sup>5</sup>



Children have a higher risk of exposure because they are often in close contact with contaminated surfaces and are more likely to put their hands or other objects in their mouths. The risks of youth exposure to thirdhand smoke include:

- Increased likelihood of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)<sup>3</sup>
- Increased likelihood of asthma.<sup>3</sup>

## Q WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON MULTI-UNIT HOUSING?

Property damage caused by thirdhand smoke can increase turnover costs and decrease property value. Restoring an apartment damaged by thirdhand smoke can cost on average 2-3 times more than a non-smoking unit. Moreover, thirdhand smoke can lead to reduced renter appeal.

## Q HOW DO YOU KNOW IF AN APARTMENT IS CONTAMINATED?

**Smell:** You can smell cigarette smoke in the apartment,

**See:** You can see staining or discoloration of surfaces such as walls, countertops, and tiles,

**Test:** Even in the absence of stains or odor, thirdhand smoke may still be present. Several test kits are available (see examples below), although, Live Smoke Free cannot attest to their efficacy or recommend a particular brand,

- Nicotine test kit from EMSL Analytical: <http://www.emsltestkits.com/nicotine>
- Tobacco smoke test kit from Home Air Check: <http://homeaircheck.com/products/>



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## Q HOW CAN YOU PREVENT EXPOSURE?

### RENTERS

#### If you smoke:

- Always smoke outside to protect your family, friends, and neighbors
- After smoking, change your clothes before coming in close contact with others, especially children

#### If you are moving to a new apartment:

- Make sure the building has a smoke-free policy before you sign the lease
- If the building recently went smoke free, ask if the unit was thoroughly painted and cleaned

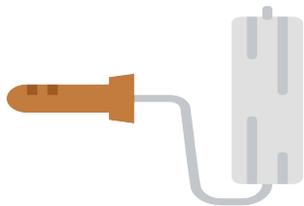
#### If you live in an apartment with thirdhand smoke contamination:

- Ask the property owner or manager to restore the apartment by painting, deep-cleaning, and replacing fixtures
- Ask to move to a different unit



### MANAGERS

- Adopt a smoke-free policy for your building
- Clean and restore apartments after the building goes smoke free
- Mitigation may require painting, deep-cleaning, and replacing fixtures such as carpet, counter tops, and tile
- Cleaning and restoring apartments helps smokers quit because it eliminates the smell of cigarette smoke, which can be a trigger for some smokers
- Fresh and clean apartments make smoking violations easier to detect and can improve compliance



## FREE RESOURCES FROM LIVE SMOKE FREE

- Consultations and Presentations
- Promotions (Press Releases, Signage, Listing in a Statewide Housing Directory)
- Implementation Tools (Surveys, Notification letters, Lease language, Translated documents)
- Educational Resources (Tailored for Management, Staff, and Residents)
- Linkages to cessation resources



### References

- 1 Matt, G. E., et al. "Thirdhand tobacco smoke: Emerging evidence and arguments for a multidisciplinary research agenda." Environmental Health Perspectives September 2011: 1218-1226.
- 2 Singer, B.C.; Hodgson, A.T.; Nazaroff, W.W., "Effect of sorption on exposures to organic gases from environmental tobacco smoke (ETS)," Proceedings: Indoor Air 2002, 2002. <http://eetdpubs.lbl.gov/publications/53/effect-sorptionexposures-organic-gases-environmental-tobacco-smoke-ets>
- 3 Winickoff, J.P. "Beliefs about the health effects of 'thirdhand' smoke and home smoking bans." Pediatrics Vol 123 No 1, January 2009: 74-79.
- 4 Sleiman, M., et al. "Formation of carcinogens indoors by surface-mediated reactions to nicotine with nitrous acid, leading to potential thirdhand smoke hazards." Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences January 2010.
- 5 Adhami N, Starck SR, Flores C, Martins Green M (2016) A Health Threat to Bystanders Living in the Homes of Smokers: How Smoke Toxins Deposited on Surfaces Can Cause Insulin Resistance. PLoS ONE 11(3): e0149510. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0149510

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