

# 30 facts about passive smoking\*

## How far away do I need to be to stay safe from the health hazards caused by smoke?

- ▶ There is no real safety limit. If you can smell cigarettes, you can be exposed to harmful substances.
- ▶ Some studies recommend a minimum distance of 10 metres from smokers to avoid health issues. Children should stay even further away.



*Tobacco smoke contains more than 7,000 components, more than 60 of which are carcinogenic. The components also include many toxic chemicals.*

## Speak up about passive smoking:

- ▶ Tell smoker that the smoke has been proven to be toxic to the person next to them, too. If you can, tell them what kind of symptoms or difficulties you get if you breathe in smoke.
- ▶ Ask smokers to take the other people around them into account and smoke in a place where non-smokers do not need to breathe in the smoke.
- ▶ If possible, choose a calm moment and be constructive. Show that you care not only about your own health, but also about the health of the smoker.

## The health risks of passive smoking in adults:

- ▶ Makes the symptoms of many respiratory diseases worse and causes the treatment balance to deteriorate.
- ▶ Causes acute upper respiratory symptoms; people with allergies are more sensitive to the harmful effects.
- ▶ Increases asthma symptoms and the need for medication, more emergency visits and hospitalisations. In addition, reduces lung function values and increases respiratory reactivity.
- ▶ Increases the risk of developing COPD and more flare-ups in people with COPD.
- ▶ Causes lung cancer and increases the risk of breast cancer.
- ▶ Increases coronary artery disease mortality and disease morbidity as well as chest pain symptoms, exacerbates coronary artery disease in patients who already have the disease.



**Passive smoking** = a non-smoker being exposed to the harmful combustion products of tobacco smoke while someone else is smoking. This means either smoke from the burning end of a cigarette (side-stream smoke) or smoke exhaled by the smoker (mainstream smoke). The concentration of many harmful substances is higher in the side-stream smoke, although the smoke is usually diluted when it is released into a larger space.

**Third-hand smoke** = components of tobacco smoke that remain on surfaces, textiles and house dust in addition to the smoker's skin and hair. Even a thorough cleaning will not remove all residual tobacco smoke. The harmful substances in third-hand smoke are released back into the air later, and they may also stick to anything that comes into contact with the surfaces.

### Health hazards of exposure to e-cigarette vapour:

- ▶ The amount of research data on the health hazards of e-cigarette vapour used by another person to the people around the user is still limited.
- ▶ Those around the person breathing in the vapour are also exposed to the substances in the vapour causing a health hazard (nicotine, heavy metals and other harmful components).
- ▶ May cause irritation and problems in the respiratory and circulatory system.



### Children are especially vulnerable to third-hand smoke\*\*.

They come to close contact with contaminated surfaces when they play on the floor or put objects in their mouths. Sitting in the lap of family members and caregivers who smoke and otherwise being in close contact with them increases exposure.



### Effects of exposure during pregnancy on the child:

- ▶ The risk of low weight increases.
- ▶ The risk of premature birth becomes 1.57 times higher.



### Children are more sensitive to the health hazards of tobacco smoke, because:

- ▶ The immunological and physiological development of their respiratory system and body is not yet complete.
- ▶ They breathe more frequently and their inspiratory volume per unit of weight is higher, which increases the amount of exposure.
- ▶ The metabolism of their liver and other cleansing mechanisms are still immature, which means that harmful substances leave the body more slowly.



### The health risks of passive smoking in children:

- ▶ The risk of lower respiratory tract infections is more than 1.5 times higher. Tobacco smoke weakens the immunological defence mechanisms, damages the function of cilia and the epithelium in the airways → makes bacterial adhesion easier
- ▶ More cases of acute bronchitis, bronchiolitis, RSV infection and pneumonia.
- ▶ Higher risk of glue ear as well as both acute and chronic inflammation of the middle ear. Tobacco smoke impairs ciliary function in the ear ducts and causes dysfunction of the Eustachian tube due to swelling of the mucous membrane.
- ▶ The risk of chronic respiratory symptoms is also higher.
- ▶ The risk of developing asthma is higher (approx. 30%), especially in preschool children but also in older children.
- ▶ Children with asthma suffer from more symptoms and asthma attacks.
- ▶ The risk of sudden infant death syndrome nearly doubles.
- ▶ The effect on cardiovascular diseases may start already in childhood. Children of smokers have a worse blood lipid profile than others.

