



## Fact Sheet on Second-hand Smoke and Outdoor Spaces

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*Many people believe that outdoor exposure to second-hand smoke is not harmful; however, outdoor second-hand smoke is now recognized as an important health hazard in Canada.*

### **New research on outdoor exposure to cigarette smoke**

According to researchers at Stanford University: <sup>1</sup>

If you are next to a person smoking outdoors, you can breathe in smoke that is much more concentrated than normal air pollution levels.

In fact, being within a few feet of a smoker outdoors may expose you to air pollution levels that are similar to levels measured in homes and bars.

If you move about six feet away from an outdoor smoker or stay upwind, your exposure levels are much lower.

A study of outdoor air pollution from second-hand smoke at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County suggested that when groups of smokers congregate in one place, the amount of air pollution increases according to the size of the group.<sup>2</sup>

### **Outdoor smoking can make cigarette smoking seem more acceptable to children and youth**

Municipal smoking bans have forced many smokers to smoke outdoors at the entrances to buildings, on the street and even in public parks and recreational areas. As a result, children are not only exposed to second-hand smoke in these locations; they also observe smokers more often and may begin to see smoking as more acceptable.<sup>3</sup>

### **Protecting the public from exposure to outdoor second hand smoke**

The public is becoming more and more concerned about the effects of outdoor smoking. A recent study in Minnesota showed that 70% of people favoured tobacco free park policies. Their reasons were to reduce litter, reduce youth exposure to smoking, to avoid second-hand smoke and to establish positive role models.<sup>4</sup>

In the United States, many state and local governments have passed laws restricting outdoor smoking at playgrounds, building entrances and other public areas. Some of the strictest laws are in California.<sup>5</sup>

In Canada, protection from second-hand smoke varies across the country. In some provinces, smoking is banned from all public places and workplaces. Increasingly, jurisdictions are banning smoking on outdoor patios attached to restaurants and bars,<sup>6</sup> however at present, there are no bans on smoking outdoors.

## References

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See also: <http://news-service.stanford.edu/news/2007/may9/smoking-050907.html>
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- <sup>3</sup> Canadian Cancer Society Website. "Society researcher targets next tobacco frontier: outdoor smoking". Accessed December 6, 2007 from [http://www.cancer.ca/ccs/internet/standard/0,3182,3172\\_14075\\_611368322\\_langId-en,00.html](http://www.cancer.ca/ccs/internet/standard/0,3182,3172_14075_611368322_langId-en,00.html)
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