



Make Your Home Smoke-free in a Multi-Unit Residence

A Guide to Protecting Your Family
From Second-hand Smoke

Introduction & Overview

Like most Canadians today, you are likely already protected from second-hand smoke in public places. You may also not allow smoking in your home and car. **However, if you live in a multi-unit residence, you may still be exposed to tobacco smoke entering your home from neighbouring units.** This guide is intended to help you protect your family from second-hand smoke in a multi-unit dwelling.

- » Smoking in multi-unit residences is becoming more of an issue as non-smoking residents are concerned about second-hand smoke seeping into their home from neighbouring units where the residents smoke. A public opinion research report conducted on behalf of Health Canada found that 36% of people who live in multi-unit housing experience smoke seeping or drifting into their personal living space, usually through an open window or door, from a neighbour's patio, balcony or outdoor common area.
- » Studies suggest that children and adults who live in multi-unit dwellings where smoking is permitted have higher rates of exposure to second-hand smoke, even if no one in their home smokes.
- » Second-hand smoke can enter apartments through air ventilation systems, by drifting in from neighbouring balconies or from the ground floor, or by infiltration from hallways and neighbouring units.



- » Smoke-free multi-unit residences would protect children from exposure to toxic tobacco smoke.
- » Smoke-free multi-unit residences can also save money for landlords. Cigarettes are a leading cause of residential fires, so a ban could reduce insurance costs.

What You Can Do to Protect Your Family From Second-Hand Smoke

The steps you could take to protect your family include raising the issue with other tenants, the owners and/or the landlord. Discuss with them the negative health effects of second-hand smoke and the benefits of introducing smoke-free units.

Another important step is to find out where smoking may already not be allowed in your building by examining:

- » The laws governing smoking in your province or territory and/or your local municipality.
- » Your lease agreement or the declaration/by-laws of your condominium.

If there is a policy or law banning smoking in common areas of your building, part of the problem may stem from lack of awareness or enforcement. To increase awareness, no-smoking signs should be posted wherever smoking is not permitted.

Other actions you could take may include trying to take measures to seal your unit in an attempt to decrease second-hand smoke seepage. However, it is advised that you talk to building management prior to making any modifications to your unit.

Organize a Smoke-free Policy Where You Live

You may want to work with neighbours and the building owner to develop a smoke-free policy. These policies can govern a variety of spaces, including common areas, outdoor child play areas, apartments, and blocks or floors of units. While some multi-unit dwellings have enacted complete smoke-free policies, others have phased-in policies where units occupied by smokers are converted to smoke-free units when they leave.

More Resources

For more information, visit:

- » *Smoke-Free Housing Canada* at www.smokefreehousing.ca
- » The second-hand smoke in multi-unit dwellings section of the *Non-Smoker's Rights Association's* website at www.nsra-adnf.ca/cms/page1433.cfm

To learn more about second-hand smoke, read *Make Your Home and Car Smoke-Free: A Guide to Protecting Your Family from Second-Hand Smoke*, available at canada.ca/health. This guide provides factual information on second-hand smoke and is intended to help families remove second-hand smoke from their homes and cars.

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