

SECONDHAND SMOKE AND BREAST CANCER

A growing body of recent scientific evidence shows that secondhand smoke exposure is a cause of breast cancer.¹ Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in Western countries and is the leading cancer killer in nonsmoking women.² Secondhand smoke is a cause of breast cancer, primarily in young, premenopausal women who have never smoked, and it contributes to preventable and premature death among women.

Toxins in Secondhand Smoke Target Breast Tissue

- Tobacco smoke contains multiple fat-soluble compounds known to induce mammary tumors.^{1,3}
- Of the 50 known cancer-causing agents in cigarettes, 20 specifically target breast tissue and mammary glands.¹
- Chemicals from tobacco smoke reach breast tissue and have been found in breast fluid and breast milk.⁴

Young Premenopausal Women Are Most At Risk

- Young, premenopausal women exposed to secondhand smoke have a 70% greater risk of developing breast cancer than those who are exposed later in life.¹
- Breast tissue is more vulnerable to secondhand smoke exposure at certain times during a woman's life.⁵
- Women who have never had children and were exposed to secondhand smoke earlier in life are at particularly high risk for breast cancer.⁶
- Regardless of age, women who are exposed to secondhand smoke have a 25% increased risk of developing breast cancer.¹

Female Food Service Workers Are Disproportionately Affected

- Waitresses have the highest prevalence of exposure to secondhand smoke of any occupational group.⁷
- Young women between puberty and first full term pregnancy, who are more likely than men to work in the hospitality industry, are most at risk for secondhand smoke related breast cancer.
- Nonsmoking women who work as waitresses have the highest rates of lung cancer than women who work in any other occupational group.⁸

Breast Cancer and Lung Cancer

- Even though lung cancer is the most commonly associated cancer related to secondhand smoke exposure, some studies suggest that among young, premenopausal women, there is more scientific evidence linking secondhand smoke to breast cancer than there was linking SHS exposure to lung cancer in 1986 when the Surgeon General first concluded that SHS *causes* lung cancer.⁹

For more information, contact the Kentucky Center for Smoke-free Policy, 859-323-4587 or www.kcsp.uky.edu.

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