

Protect yourself and your family from second- and third-hand smoke

Are you exposed to unwanted drifting smoke in your home from a neighbouring unit? You can protect yourself, family and other tenants from hazardous second- and third-hand smoke by following these tips and taking action to help your multi-unit housing building implement a smoke-free policy.

What is second- and third-hand smoke?

Second-hand smoke is the combination of the smoke that is exhaled by the person smoking and the smoke that comes from the burning end of a cigarette, cigar or pipe. There are over 7,000 chemicals found in second-hand smoke and up to 70 are known to cause cancer. Second-hand smoke causes disease and death in both smokers and non-smokers. Exposure can cause lung cancer, heart and respiratory disease.

Third-hand smoke is the chemicals in tobacco smoke that are left behind on surfaces. Third-hand smoke gets trapped in hair, skin, fabric, carpet, furniture and toys, hours or days after a cigarette is put out. It builds up over time and resists normal cleaning. Third-hand smoke is still being studied to determine its possible dangers. It is known that third-hand smoke contains cancer-causing materials. Infants, children and non-smoking adults may be at risk of tobacco related health problems when they inhale, ingest or touch substances containing third-hand smoke.

Tips to help you protect yourself and your family from second and third-hand smoke

- Caulk or seal around plumbing, electrical outlets, phone jacks, fixtures, cracks and gaps
- Keep windows and doors closed
- Weather-strip doors and windows where possible
- Wear a jacket or another layer of clothing that can be removed after smoking and remember to wash your hands

For more information on second- and third-hand smoke and how to protect you and your family, visit york.ca

When your neighbours smoke

If you still notice second-hand smoke from a neighbouring unit drifting into your home after taking measures mentioned above, there are some additional things you can do to address the issue:

1. Write a letter of complaint to your landlord about the drifting smoke and how it is affecting you and your family
2. Ask your landlord to make sure the ventilation system in your building is operating properly
3. Keep a journal and carefully document your exposure to drifting smoke in your unit
4. Discuss the option of making the building [smoke-free](#) with your landlord

The only effective way to prevent second-hand smoke exposure in multi-unit housing is to not allow smoking anywhere in or around the building.

There are laws in place to protect residents from second-hand smoke. The [Smoke-Free Ontario Act](#) (SFOA) prohibits smoking in common areas of [multi-unit housing](#) such as party rooms, lobby areas and laundry facilities; however, does not prohibit smoking inside residential units of multi-unit housing buildings, to outside areas that are a part of the unit, including balconies, and shared outside areas such as building entrances, exits and grounds.



Your [landlord or housing provider](#) can support the development of smoke-free policies for your multi-unit housing building that goes beyond the SFOA.

York Region Public Health staff can consult with your landlord or housing provider to develop [smoke-free housing policies](#), including quit smoking supports for your neighbouring tenants.

Contact York Region Public Health's Tobacco-free Living Services at TFLEDC@york.ca or call Access York at 1-877-464-9675, TTY 1-866-512-6228

For more information, visit [Tools and Resources for Tenants](#) or smokefreehousingon.ca

Additional Resources

- [When neighbours smoke: A tenant's guide](#), Smoke-Free Housing Ontario

