Avoiding Secondhand Smoke

Protect yourself and your family

Overview of themes

- Dangers of secondhand smoke
- Communication
- Health protection
- Technical solutions
- Legal basis
- Policy approaches

Healthy Living – Smoke-Free Living

Second-hand smoke affects us all – whether at home, in the car, or at the playground. Children, the elderly, pregnant women, and pets are particularly at risk.

This document provides an overview of the topic and shows you how to protect your family from the dangers of second-hand smoke.

For more information :
www.passivesmoke.ch

What is passive smoking?

Passive smoking is the involuntary inhalation of tobacco smoke present in the environment — either directly from the ambient air (secondhand smoke) or indirectly via residues deposited on surfaces, clothing, or in the ambient air (thirdhand smoke). These particles can remain active for several months, even without any odour or visible smoke.

Only a 100% smoke-free environment offers effective protection – airing out or cleaning is not enough.

Smoke contains more than **7,000 chemical substances**, including at least **70 carcinogens** — no inhaled amount is safe.

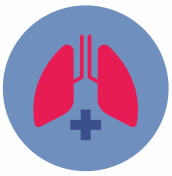
Like active smoking, passive smoking poses numerous health risks: chronic respiratory diseases, cardiovascular disorders, cancers, and inflammation.

Everyone is affected: **children, adults, vulnerable individuals, and pets**.

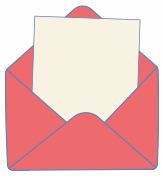
Clear communication

Express your needs constructively

Speak openly with your guests, neighbours, or colleagues if the smoke bothers you.



Explain calmly why a smoke-free environment is important to you — for example, for the sake of your children's health.



If the situation persists, you can write to your neighbours, the building manager, or a tenants' association.
Use our template letters and advice for this purpose.

Keep a record of specific incidents — when and where the smoke appeared or entered your home. This documentation can strengthen your position.

Not sure how to approach the conversation?
→ Link to communication tips
Need help writing a letter?
→ Link to sample letters.

Protect yourself and your family

Make your **home** and **car** entirely **smoke-free spaces** — even when the windows are open.

If you smoke, do so outdoors and **wear specific** clothing just for that —for example, a "**smoking jacket**" that stays outside.

Choose **100% smoke-free schools** for your children — even outdoors.

Additionally, use these technical measures

HEPA (High-Efficiency Particulate Air) filters are designed to remove very fine particles from the air — such as dust, pollen, or bacteria.

They can **reduce** fine particles caused by secondhand smoke by **up to 70%**, particularly in winter (Barn et al., 2018; Batterman et al., 2005).

It is essential to maintain and replace the filters approximately **every five months**.

Although HEPA filters improve air quality, **they are no substitute for a 100% smoke-free environment!**

Know your rights

In Switzerland, several legal provisions provide protection against secondhand smoke:

CC art. 684 : Prohibition of excessive nuisances (odours, air pollution).

CC art. 679 : Protection against harmful interference between neighbours.

CO art. 257f : Tenants' obligation to respect neighbours.

CO art. 259a–259h : Rules regarding housing defects and rent reduction.

Workplace: Smoking is **prohibited** in indoor public spaces and workplaces.

Violations of the Federal Act on Protection against Passive Smoking may be **punishable** by a fine of **up to CHF 1,000.**

Support policy measures

Smoking bans in public places **reduce heart attacks** by up to 15% (Richiardi et al., 2009).

Non-smokers benefit from legal regulations, especially in the workplace (Olivieri et al., 2019).

These bans **improve air quality and reduce respiratory diseases**, particularly among bar staff (Goodman et al., 2007).

On a global scale, **immediate improvements in public health are observed** following the introduction of laws against secondhand smoke (Menzies, 2011).

Policy measures aimed at protecting against secondhand smoke have demonstrated significant benefits for population health
– that's why it's important to support them.

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www.passivesmoke.ch

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