

Third-hand Smoke – What is third-hand smoke and is it harmful?

You know what secondhand smoke is but what is thirdhand smoke? Thirdhand smoke is the residue from cigarettes, e-cigarette and vaping devices, and other tobacco products that collects on nearby surfaces. These dangerous chemicals cling to walls, carpets, car interiors and even clothing and hair, leaving behind a dangerous residue that can actually become more toxic over time. Exposure to this residue can damage DNA and increases the risk for short-term and long-term health problems, including asthma⁵ and cancer.

What makes thirdhand smoke so dangerous, though, is its persistence. Common cleaning methods such as vacuuming, wiping surfaces and airing out rooms aren't effective in removing the residue. Even if the smell goes away, the particles linger behind and still pose a danger. Everyone is at risk of exposure to thirdhand smoke in homes, cars, and public spaces after smoking or vaping has occurred, but infants and toddlers are especially vulnerable.

The chemicals can be absorbed through the skin or inhaled, and children teething or playing with contaminated objects will be exposed. Although thirdhand smoke has drastically decreased in public places where smoking and vaping is banned, like workplaces and restaurants, we aren't free from risk. Protect yourself and your family from the dangers of thirdhand smoke. Do not allow smoking or vaping we live, work, and play completely tobacco-free.

Everyone should have the opportunity to live in a smoke-free home. Before renting an apartment or home, ask the landlord if the previous tenants ever smoked or vaped inside. Homebuyers should also ask if any prior residents ever smoked in the home before purchasing to avoid thirdhand smoke residue.

