

# What can be done about second-hand smoke?

## smoke-free homes

The best place to begin is right at home. Make your home smoke-free. Let your loved ones and visitors know that you care about their health and about your own. Post posters and cards reminding your guests that they are in a smoke-free area.

## smoke-free workplaces

Advocate for smoke-free workplaces. If your own workplace is not yet smoke-free, contact employee groups, management, building owners, etc. and let them know how smoking restrictions at the workplace can benefit everyone. There are many sound reasons for protecting employees' health and creating workplaces free from second-hand smoke:

- Employee health, productivity and morale is higher in a smoke-free workplace;
- Smoking restrictions encourage some employees to smoke less or even quit smoking altogether, leading to lower absenteeism, lower health care costs and increased productivity;<sup>1</sup>
- Smoke-free workplaces mean lower cleaning costs, less damage to furniture and equipment, and a lower risk of fire;
- Smoke-free workplaces often reduce the risk from other industrial hazards, particularly from chemical products.<sup>2</sup> In many workplaces, smoking is a serious fire and safety hazard;
- Smoke-free workplaces can help employers avoid smoking-related workers' compensation claims.

In several countries, employees have applied to the courts to obtain smoke-free workplaces. In the Netherlands, the Asthma Fund recently sponsored a test case against the Dutch Post Office, which established the legal right to a smoke-free workplace.<sup>3</sup>

## smoke-free businesses

Support local smoke-free businesses and restaurants and encourage establishments that are not yet smoke-free to adopt a smoke-free policy. If your favorite restaurant isn't smoke-free, let the owner know that the chef's specialty would taste even better without tobacco smoke!

In countries around the world, smoke-free policies are being developed and implemented. There are many studies and success stories to dispel the fears of declined revenues due to smoking restrictions. A recent study in the US shows that smoke-free policies had no negative impact on the receipts restaurants and bars in 80 localities; and that in some cases, business increased!

Smoke-free policies are not only for restaurants, cafés and bars. Hotels, airlines, rental car agencies, department stores, taxis, public transportation agencies around the world have successfully implemented their own policies, protecting the health of customers and employees, lowering maintenance costs and improving business.

## build partnerships within the community

Second-hand smoke effects virtually everyone. Many diverse groups are ready and able to act. Look within your community to gather support for the development of smoke-free places.

Groups working in community health and health care are often most experienced in information campaigns on many aspects of tobacco use.

Teachers and other educators are in a privileged position to inform young people about the dangers of second-hand smoke and to help mobilize youth advocacy campaigns. They are often particularly sensitive to the issues of youth smoking and child health. .

<sup>1</sup> A 1997 economic study commissioned by the Canadian government calculated that it cost C\$2560 (roughly U.S. \$1870<sup>1</sup>) more to employ a smoker than a non-smoker.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See the International Programme on Chemical Safety's 1999 document on the issue, "Environmental Health Criteria 211: Health Effects of Interactions arising from Tobacco Use and Exposure to Chemical, Physical or Biological Agents," at [http://www.who.int/pcs/docs/ehc\\_211.html](http://www.who.int/pcs/docs/ehc_211.html) .

<sup>3</sup> See Astma Fonds press reports, at [http://www.astmafonds.nl/artikel.phtml?URI=nieuws/persb.phtml&nav=nieuws/\\_nav.phtml](http://www.astmafonds.nl/artikel.phtml?URI=nieuws/persb.phtml&nav=nieuws/_nav.phtml) .



Environmentalists are likely supporters of clean indoor air laws. The similarities between second-hand smoke and other forms of pollution are clear: second-hand smoke is a by-product of a highly profitable industry that makes individuals, governments and businesses bear the health and financial costs of its actions.

Sports clubs and coaches are also well-placed to know how tobacco and second-hand smoke lowers physical performance and debilitates the body.

Turn to community, business and spiritual leaders for support. These leaders often have influence and access to infrastructure to reach many people with their messages.

Cooperation and goodwill will prove very helpful, but may not be sufficient to provide protection from second-hand smoke. Call on your elected officials and urge them to create and support legislation, as well as enforcement of existing laws, that guarantee smoke-free places.

### **World No Tobacco Day events and beyond...**

Take advantage of World No Tobacco Day (WNTD), 31 May, to plan events that support your long-term goals. The following are some ideas for a WTND events:

- Take the opportunity to focus media attention on second-hand smoke and the need for further action. Inform the media of your activities, or call a press conference.
- Organize a children's congress or a youth summit where young people develop and pass a resolution asking governments to protect their rights to health and clean air.
- Consider extending WNTD to a smoke-free week, clean air month, or a smoke-free 2001. Try to keep the focus on the issue as long as possible.
- WNTD is a good day for clean air initiatives to come into effect. For example, a town's schools or restaurants or hospitals become smoke-free as of 31 May. It can also be effectively used as a day to announce new initiatives that will come into effect as of a specific future date: a workplace may announce a phase-in period for a smoking ban that will be completed on WNTD of the following year.
- Organize contests and competitions to increase public participation. For example, a "smoke-free homes" challenge could lead up to WNTD, where parents who register their homes as smoke-free are eligible for prizes and recognition.
- Workplaces can organize special events and provide information to employees about second-hand smoke. Workplaces that are not already smoke-free can sponsor a smoke-free day or week. An important complement would be the provision of programs to help employees quit smoking.
- Encourage restaurants to become smoke-free for the day, the week, or permanently. These restaurants can be part of a WNTD food festival. Table cards and other items that promote smoke-free dining can be distributed to local restaurants. Smoke-free restaurants can be honored with a "smoke-free seal of approval sticker" to put on their door. Develop a website or publication that provides an updated list of restaurants, cafés and bars that are smoke-free.
- Create and publicize a smoke-free tourists' guide to your city listing restaurants, cafés and other facilities that are smoke-free. As this type of guide lends itself well to advertising and sponsorship, it can usually be self-supporting.
- Enlist musicians who do not like playing in smoky venues to perform "smoke-free" concerts in honor of WNTD. Venues that have traditionally allowed smoking could use WNTD to launch a trial no-smoking night once a week.
- Initiate a letter-writing campaign to your elected officials and newspaper editors to inform and encourage action on second-hand smoke.

