What surfaces does tobacco smoke stick to?

Tobacco smoke contains thousands of different chemicals in the form of gases and particles, which are tiny, oily, waxy droplets. After tobacco is smoked, research has shown that 70%-90% of nicotine and NNK (a tobacco specific lung carcinogen) chemicals stay behind in indoor environments as residue. Just like a sponge can soak up water, carpets, cushions, or drywall can “soak up” the chemicals from tobacco smoke. Although the smoke in the air seems to disappear after someone smoked, the tobacco smoke residue (also known as thirdhand smoke) remains on surfaces, in dust, and on objects. Over time, this tobacco smoke residue becomes embedded into materials and can adhere to virtually any indoor surface, including carpets, walls, furniture, windows, and doors. It can also adhere to objects we use every day, such as furniture, dishes, silverware, curtains, and pillows, as well as to our skin, hair, and clothing. In an environment where tobacco was smoked regularly, it is reasonable to assume that tobacco smoke residue has contaminated every surface and every object. This residue can build up over time and be detected years after smoking has stopped. Similar to the water dripping and evaporating from a soaked sponge, tobacco smoke residue can be later released back into the air or picked up by touching, leading to exposure long after the cigarette was smoked.

Sources


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