My family members smoke, but only outside. Do they bring thirdhand smoke into my house when they come inside?

When outdoor smokers come inside, they bring thirdhand smoke with them. Often you can smell tobacco smoke when they walk in the door. But even when you can't smell it, toxic tobacco residue called thirdhand smoke, is brought in on the clothes, skin, hair, and even the exhaled breath of the person who smoked outside. The tobacco smoke odor is not just a nuisance, it is a sign that a mixture of tobacco smoke pollutants—some we can smell and some we can't—have been brought into the home.

Inside the home, the effect is similar to someone smoking a cigarette inside. The gases and particles in the tobacco residue on the smoker's clothes, skin, and hair can be transferred, stick to, and ultimately become embedded in materials and objects in your home. This includes carpets, walls, furniture, blankets, and toys. The gases and particles can also be released into the air and accumulate in house dust. As a result, nonsmokers may be exposed to toxic thirdhand smoke, even though no cigarettes were smoked inside.

To keep toxic tobacco residue out of your home, tell family members and friends about thirdhand smoke and help them adopt these strategies:

1. Remove clothes worn while smoking before entering the home. Leave them outside on a porch or patio until they can be washed.
2. Wash clothes worn while smoking each day to avoid release of toxic compounds into the air.
3. Whenever possible, shower immediately upon entering the home after smoking to remove tobacco smoke residue from hair and skin. If showering is not possible, thoroughly wash hands and face.

Sources


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