

THIRDHAND SMOKE Resource Center

What tobacco products contribute to thirdhand smoke?

Thirdhand smoke is the chemical residue from tobacco smoke. It is also called “tobacco smoke residue” or “stale tobacco smoke.” The chemicals in thirdhand smoke are toxic to humans, especially children. It can linger for years in dust and on household surfaces. It can also become embedded in carpets, furniture, clothes, and building materials. It is difficult and expensive to remove.

Cigarettes are not the only source of thirdhand smoke. Any tobacco product, including cigarettes, cigars, cigarillos, little cigars, pipes, electronic cigarettes, water pipes (sometimes called hookah or shisha), dissolvable products, and smokeless tobacco products such as chew, spit, snuff, and snus, can be a source of thirdhand smoke.

Tobacco products are manufactured from the leaves of the tobacco plant. Some of toxic chemicals in tobacco smoke occur naturally in the tobacco plant, others are added or created during the manufacturing process, and yet others form when tobacco is burned.

All tobacco products can leave behind a chemical residue. Scientists most frequently study the toxic residue from burning tobacco products, such as cigarettes, cigars, and pipes and hookah. Nonetheless, even tobacco products that do not burn are associated with thirdhand smoke. One study found evidence indicating that thirdhand smoke from vaping was linked to developmental issues when infant mice were exposed. Increased levels of thirdhand smoke have been found in indoor environments where residents used smokeless tobacco, electronic cigarettes, and marijuana.

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Sources

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