

THIRDHAND SMOKE Resource Center

How can I make sure that I stay in a smokefree hotel room?

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. Thirdhand smoke 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.

Whether traveling for business or pleasure, some research and a few simple steps will maximize your chances of finding smokefree accommodations in hotels, short-term rentals, bed & breakfast, or Airbnb’s.

The Internet is a great source for information, but you will learn more about a hotel’s smokefree status from a telephone conversation with the staff at the hotel where you will be staying.

When you call the hotel, ask if smoking or vaping is allowed anywhere on the property. The best answer to this question is: “No, we are a 100% smokefree property inside and out.” Great! Go ahead, make your reservation.

More likely the answer will be, “Yes, we allow smoking in some places.” Then you need to do more research to find out exactly where smoking is allowed. Because smoke can travel easily through windows, air ducts, hallways, and other indoor environments, it is likely that tobacco smoke residue could contaminate all rooms in a hotel with designated smoking rooms or that allows smoking on the property.



If smoking is allowed in some areas, follow-up questions should include:

- Is smoking allowed in any of the rooms?
- What is the penalty for violating the non-smoking policy?
- Are there signs posted in each room about the non-smoking policy, including the penalty for violating?

If smoking is not allowed in any room, there are posted signs, and a hefty penalty for violators, you should feel comfortable making a reservation. However, you still need to find out exactly where smoking is allowed on the property. The best answer to this question is “Smoking is prohibited within 50 feet of any entrance or outdoor common area such as a pool.” Great! Go ahead, make your reservation. If your conversation with the desk clerk at the hotel reveals that smoking is allowed on the property, either in some rooms, outdoor common areas such as a pool, or within 50 feet of an entrance, you should keep looking for another smokefree hotel.

Do you have more questions about the toxic legacy of tobacco smoke, how it affects human health, and what we can do about it? [Learn more here.](#)

Updated: May 2023



Sources:

DeCarlo PF, Avery AM, Waring MS. Thirdhand smoke uptake to aerosol particles in the indoor environment. *Sci Adv.* 2018;9: 4(5): eaap8368. DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.aap8368.

Kennedy, H. R., Egan, C., & Welding, K., (2020). Assessing potential public health concerns in Airbnb venues in four Canadian cities. *Journal of Environmental Health*, 83(3), 8-12.

McDaniel PA, Malone RE. You Want Your Guests to Be Happy in This Business: Hoteliers' Decisions to Adopt Voluntary Smoke-Free Guest-Room Policies. *Am J Health Promot.* 2018 Nov;32(8):1740-1746. doi: 10.1177/0890117118763742.

Quintana PJ, Fortmann AL, Zakarian JM, Galaviz VE, Chatfield DA, Hoh E, Hovell MF, Winston C. Thirdhand smoke and exposure in California hotels: non-smoking rooms fail to protect non-smoking hotel guests from tobacco smoke exposure. *Tob Control.* 2014;23(3):264-72. Epub 2013/05/15. doi: 10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2012-050824.

Weigel EA, Matt GE. When Hotel Guests Complain About Tobacco, Electronic Cigarettes, and Cannabis: Lessons for Implementing Smoking Bans. *Tobacco Use Insights.* 2022;15. doi:10.1177/1179173X221124900

Zakarian JM, Quintana PJE, Winston CH, Matt GE. Hotel smoking policies and their implementation: a survey of California hotel managers. *Tob Induced Diseases.* 2017 Oct 30;15:40. doi: 10.1186/s12971-017-0147-6.

