Thirdhand Smoke Resource Center

How can I make sure a hotel or vacation rental is smokefree?

The Short Answer:

Thirdhand smoke is the chemicals left behind when someone smokes tobacco. Thirdhand smoke is unhealthy for people and pets. It can stick around for a long time in homes and cars. It gets into your body if you inhale, swallow, or touch the chemicals. Getting rid of it is really hard and can cost a lot of money.

You may be able to check online to confirm that a hotel, Airbnb, or other short-term stay is smokefree. However, what "smokefree" means is often unclear.

We recommend that you ask these follow-up questions before booking:

- When was the smokefree policy introduced?
- Is smoking allowed on the property? If so, where on the property?
- What is the penalty for smoking where it is not allowed?
- How are guests informed of the nonsmoking policy?

If the smokefree policy was introduced more than a year ago, smoking is not allowed anywhere on the property, guests are adequately informed of the policy, and there is a hefty penalty for violators, you can feel comfortable making a reservation. Be sure to thank the hotel for being smokefree!

If the hotel just recently adopted the policy, does allow smoking or does not enforce a penalty, consider staying somewhere else.

The Long Answer:

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 & breakfasts, or Airbnbs.

For many establishments, you can check online to see if they are smokefree, but you will learn more about the smokefree status through a phone call with an employee.

When you call, ask when the smokefree policy was introduced and if smoking or vaping is allowed anywhere on the property. Ideally, the employee will say, “No, we are a 100% smokefree property inside and out.” Great! Go ahead make your reservation.

More likely, they will say “Yes, we allow smoking in some places.” If that’s the case, you should find out 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 broadly contaminate the property, even if there are designated smokefree rooms.

If smoking is allowed in some areas, ask these follow-up questions:

- When was the smokefree policy introduced?
- Where is smoking allowed on the property? Consider balconies, the lobby, courtyards, and other common areas.
- What is the penalty for smoking where it is not allowed?
- How are guests informed of the nonsmoking policy? Does this include no smoking signs posted in the rooms and throughout the property?

If smoking is not allowed in or near any room, there are posted no smoking signs, guests are adequately informed of the policy, and there is a hefty penalty for violators, you can feel comfortable making a reservation. Be sure to thank the hotel for being smokefree!

If smoking is allowed in or near any of the rooms, including indoor and outdoor common areas, look for another place to stay.

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.

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Sources:

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