Second-Hand Smoke

I don’t want to lecture you about how smoking is bad for you—I bet all of your teachers have taught you that. But do you know about the risk of exposure to second-hand smoke? Second-hand smoke is a mixture of the smoke given off by a cigarette and the smoke breathed out by a smoker. It floats around in the air and is harmful to everyone who is around it.

Children are especially sensitive to second-hand smoke. For example, children with exposure to second-hand smoke are more likely to get sick with ear infections, colds, sore throats, and other more serious diseases. They are also more likely to get asthma. If they already have asthma, second-hand smoke can make it worse. And asthma can be very dangerous. Even dogs and cats can get sick from being around smokers!

But, wait, it gets worse. Recent studies have shown that third-hand smoke is also harmful. Third-hand smoke contains the cancer-causing chemical particles from cigarette smoke that stick to clothing, hair, toys, carpeting, walls, and furniture, long after a cigarette has been put out. Have you ever walked by someone and known that they were a smoker because of the way they smelled? That’s an example of third-hand smoke.

So in the future, if you see someone smoking, take a moment to think about it. You may think that people who smoke should be allowed to have that pleasure. You may not even really believe that second-hand smoke can injure you, personally. But the figures don’t lie. Hundreds of thousands of people are affected each year by second- and third-hand smoke, and some even die. Many states have even banned smoking from all public places because second-hand smoke is so dangerous. So be sure to take care of yourself, and avoid exposure to second-hand and third-hand smoke. And if you know anyone who smokes, encourage them to quit—for their health and yours!