



# Blacks & Secondhand Smoke Fact-Sheet

## Secondhand Smoke

- Secondhand smoke is the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States.
- In the United States, secondhand smoke is responsible for an estimated 35,000 to 40,000 heart disease deaths, 3,000 lung cancer deaths, and 150,000 to 300,000 lower respiratory tract infections (such as pneumonia and bronchitis) in children younger than 18 months of age, which results in 7,500 to 15,000 hospitalizations annually.
- Children exposed to secondhand smoke are at risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), acute respiratory infections, ear problems, and severe asthma. Long-term exposure puts children at risk of behavior problems, such as depression and anxiety.
- More than half of the chemicals in tobacco smoke affect the nonsmoker inhaling the smoke, making "secondhand smoking" another important cause of lung cancer.
- Some studies claim that nonsmokers living with smokers have a 25% increase in risk of death from heart attack, are more likely to suffer a stroke, and can sometimes contract genital cancer.

## Secondhand Smoke & Blacks

- Seventy-two percent of African Americans are exposed to secondhand smoke compared to 50% of whites, and 45% of Hispanics.
- Smoking or being exposed to cigarette smoke contributes to the high rate of asthma among African Americans. Asthma affects African American children more than any other disease.
- African Americans are disproportionately employed in labor and factory jobs (40.7% compared to the national average of 27.3%), which have the highest rates of exposure to secondhand smoke. African Americans comprise roughly 12% of the restaurant workforce, which has the least protection from Smokefree laws.
- The living conditions of many African Americans (extended families with extra adults in the household, apartment living with shared ventilation) place many African American children at increased risk for secondhand smoke.

