

Smoke Can Travel Through Walls

Scientific studies show that smoke from a neighboring apartment can travel through ventilation systems, pipes, **walls**, open windows and doors, **electrical sockets** and even tiny **cracks in plaster and drywall**.¹

While many Californians have made the choice to not allow smoking inside their homes, many living in apartments and condominiums are still exposed to drifting toxic secondhand smoke.

One third of Californians live in multi-unit housing² where units share walls, floors or ceilings, which means that millions may be exposed to secondhand smoke even if they do not allow smoking in their unit.³

Tobacco smoke is also absorbed into walls, floors, furniture, clothes, toys and other household surfaces within minutes to hours after it is exhaled.⁴ Chemicals in the smoke can then be recycled into the air for hours, days and even months.⁵ Airing out rooms or separating the smoking from nonsmoking units within the same building does not always provide protection.⁶

Not allowing smoking in indoor spaces is the only way to completely prevent exposure to secondhand smoke. Owners of apartment buildings have the right to make their buildings smoke-free. Landlords can actually save money in cleaning costs when preparing a unit that a smoker lived in for a new tenant. According to a 2010 study, on average, it costs nearly \$5,000 more to prepare a smoking unit for a new tenant than it does to prepare a nonsmoking unit.⁷

If you are a tenant and are suffering from drifting secondhand smoke in your unit, there are steps you can take to work with your neighbors and landlord to adopt a smoke-free policy for your building.

In addition, if you have a medical condition made worse by secondhand smoke drifting into your apartment, federal and state disability laws might help you address the problem. Depending on the nature of your disability, your landlord may be required to make changes to reduce your exposure.

References

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