

[IMAGE]

Relax ... But Don't Take a Deep Breath

Understandably, when you go to public places where people are smoking around you, you are probably concerned that the second-hand smoke is not only unpleasant, but also damaging to your health (especially if your children are with you). Without a doubt, cigarettes are horrible for the health of smokers, increasing risks for everything from cancer to heart disease. A recent study in the *British Medical Journal* may help put your mind somewhat at ease regarding second-hand smoke, though.

To determine the risks of long-term second-hand smoke, researchers examined spouses of smokers for tobacco-related diseases. Over 39 years of data were gathered on 120,000 California adults, focusing on approximately 35,000 people who had never smoked but had a spouse who did. The researchers wanted to see if the spouses were at a higher risk for diseases commonly associated with smoking.

There was no significantly increased risk for heart disease, lung cancer or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (all clearly linked to smoking) in spouses of smokers than in spouses of nonsmokers. Current or past exposure to environmental tobacco smoke showed no significant associations to any long-term health condition studied.

This isn't to say that second-hand smoke is harmless, though. Other studies have shown that it may increase the risk for respiratory problems in children and infants, and there may be other, smaller health risks from being exposed to long-term second-hand smoke. But the next time someone lights up near you, no need to panic. They are doing much more damage to their own health than to yours.

Reference:

Enstrom JE, Kabat GC. Environmental tobacco smoke and tobacco related mortality in a prospective study of Californians, 1960-98. *British Medical Journal* 2003;326, pp. 1057-1066.

To read about the many dangers of smoking, go to
www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/general/smoking/index.html.

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