



# Dickinson-Iron District Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Dickinson-Iron District Health Department Informs Public about Thirdhand Smoke

Kingsford and Iron River, Michigan, August 12, 2015 - Everyone knows about the health risks of inhaling secondhand smoke, but even remnants of tobacco smoke that linger on various surfaces can pose a danger. Thirdhand smoke refers to nicotine and other particles that cling to clothing, furniture, carpets, drapes, and walls, as well as to a person's hair and skin.

"Perhaps you have checked into a smoking room in a hotel and have smelled the thirdhand smoke when you opened the door," says Kelly Rumpf, Health Educator. "That odor indicates that the many chemicals that have no scent in thirdhand smoke are also present."

"The cumulative effect of thirdhand smoke is quite significant," according to study co-author Lara Gundel. "The findings suggest the materials could be getting more toxic with time."

More recently, the Berkeley Lab team published another study showing that thirdhand smoke continues to have harmful health effects several hours after a cigarette is put out. Tobacco smoke residues lingering in the indoor environment, also termed thirdhand smoke (THS), can be a source of long-term exposure to harmful pollutants.

People are exposed to thirdhand smoke by inhaling it, ingesting it, or through direct skin contact. Infants and young children are especially vulnerable if they crawl on floors or put fingers in their mouths.

"All tobacco smoke is toxic," says Rumpf. "We know that its dangers are dose-related. Therefore, we can assume that the more time a nonsmoker spends in places where there is thirdhand smoke, the more likelihood there is of harm." Exposure to secondhand or thirdhand smoke can trigger symptom flare-ups in people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Research suggests that children exposed to cigarette smoke face nearly double the risk of developing COPD later in life.

Once smoke residue builds up, routine cleanings, and opening windows to air out rooms, aren't enough to get rid of it. Carpets and drapes may need to be professionally cleaned or replaced as well.

"The only way to protect nonsmokers from thirdhand smoke is to create a smoke-free environment, whether that's your private home or vehicle, or in public places, such as hotels and restaurants," states Rumpf.

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