

A few of my friends smoke; I don't, and I don't like it when they smoke around me. They think I'm being overly cautious, but I am worried that I am breathing in their cigarette smoke. Should I be concerned?



This is another definition of second hand smoke – passive smoking. People often consider second hand smoke as a welfare issue, focusing on the smell and the irritation that tobacco smoke causes to eyes, nose and throat. Over the last few years, the weight of evidence for much more serious risks to health from second hand smoke has grown too great to ignore.

But what is Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS)? It is a mixture of the smoke given off by the burning end of a cigarette or other tobacco products and the smoke exhaled by smokers.

More than three million people die annually from tobacco-related disease worldwide. Tobacco smoke continues to be an important source of exposure to toxic air contaminants in homes, public places and some work places. Two thirds of smoke emanating from a burning cigarette is

not inhaled by the smoker, but is released into the air contaminating the air breathed in by people in the surroundings. ETS is hazardous and contains a mixture of more than 4,000 chemicals, many of them toxic. Chemically, side-stream smoke contains carcinogens and toxins regardless of the brand, the amount released into the air, or whether the cigarettes are filtered. ETS contains a greater fraction of fine particles, which when inhaled are carried more deeply into the lungs.

Immediate effects of passive smoking include eye irritation, coughing, headaches, sore throat, dizziness and nausea.

If the smoker has the right to smoke, then non-smokers have the right to breathe clean air.

Our medical advisor is Dr Amr Hamdy MD, from New Capital Medical Centre. For more medical advice please contact 02 448 1800.