

Report: Secondhand smoke bad at any level

27 June 2006

There is no safe level of how much exposure a person has to secondhand tobacco smoke, the U.S. Surgeon General said in a report issued Tuesday.

In "The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke," Dr. Richard Carmona said even brief secondhand smoke exposure can cause immediate harm, including a 25 percent to 30 percent increase in risk of heart disease and a 20 percent to 30 percent increase in lung cancer risk in non-smoking adults.

The report said the findings are of major public health concern as nearly half of all non-smoking Americans are still regularly exposed to secondhand smoke.

However, Carmona noted progress in monitored levels of cotinine, a biological marker for secondhand smoke exposure, which have fallen in non-smokers by 70 percent since the late 1980s.

"Smoke-free indoor environments are proven, simple approaches that prevent exposure and harm," Carmona wrote.

The full report is available online at www.surgeongeneral.gov.

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