Secondhand (and Third-Hand) Smoke Increases Your Pet's Cancer Risk

Did you know? A cat who lives with a pack-a-day smoker is three times more likely to develop lymphoma.

September 3, 2021 By Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

If you're a smoker, you probably realize the dangers smoking may pose to your health. But have you ever thought about how the habit affects your pet? According to Food and Drug Administration (FDA) veterinarian Carmela Stamper, D.V. M., the news is not good.

"Smoking's not only harmful to people; it's harmful to pets, too," Stamper says. "If 58 million non-smoking adults and children are exposed to tobacco smoke, imagine how many pets are exposed at the same time."

What's Lingering on Your Rug, Furniture, and Clothes?

Both secondhand smoke (which lingers in the air your animal breathes in) and third-hand smoke hurt pets. What's third-hand smoke? It's residue (harmful compounds that are left behind, such as nicotine) that can get on skin and clothes, as well as furniture, carpets, and other things where a smoker lives.

"Like children, dogs and cats spend a lot of time on or near the floor, where tobacco smoke residue concentrates in house dust, carpets and rugs. Then, it gets on their fur," Stamper explains. "Dogs, cats and children not only breathe these harmful substances in, but pets can also ingest them by licking their owner's hair, skin, and clothes."

And of course, if your dog or cat grooms itself or another animal, he's ingesting the residues as well, Stamper says.

Facts That May Surprise You About Pets and Smoking

Did you know …

- how tobacco smoke affects a dog depends on the length of the dog's nose?
- that certain dog breeds are at increased risk of nose or lung cancer?
- that cats who live with people who smoke more than a pack of cigarettes a day have three

times the risk of developing lymphoma, a cancer of the immune system?

- that your smoking can endanger your pet bird, guinea pig, and even your fish?

Learn More

Learn more about the dangers smoking can pose to your pet and find some resources to help a smoker you know cut back on or quit smoking in the article "Be Smoke-free and Help Your Pets Live Longer, Healthier Lives," on the FDA website.

The article was originally published by The Food and Drug Adminstration on August 26, 2021. It is republished by permission.

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