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Health Department Launches New Ad Campaign Alerting Parents to the Dangers that Secondhand Smoke Poses to Children

New report shows that over a million New Yorkers are still exposed to cigarettes' poisonous chemicals at home and at work, despite the progress over the past decade

December 28, 2010 – No parent would intentionally subject a child to asthma, ear infections and bronchitis, let alone expose the child to cancer-causing chemicals. Yet new research from the Health Department finds that an estimated 150,000 adult smokers living with children in New York City continue to allow smoking at home. More than half of all NYC smokers (58%) still allow smokers to light up in their homes. Children are especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of secondhand smoke, so the Health Department is sending parents an important New Year's message: *Don't raise a secondhand-smoke kid.*

In a new series of television spots called Secondhand Smoke Kids, directed by Spike Lee and airing in New York City this week, the Health Department shows how a parent's cigarette smoke can raise a child's risk of both short- and long-term illnesses, and urges those still smoking to quit today. "More than half of New York City non-smokers are still inhaling noxious chemicals from other people's cigarettes," said Dr. Thomas Farley, New York City Health Commissioner. "No one should have to breathe secondhand smoke – whether at home or in a public recreation area. If you haven't quit smoking, protect yourself as well as your loved ones by quitting today. If you haven't made your home smoke-free, now is the time. Choose health, for yourself and your family."



In a new report, (available at nyc.gov, keyword secondhand smoke), the Health Department shows that female smokers are less likely than male smokers to have smoke-free policies in their homes (35% versus 47%). Black smokers are less likely to have smoke-free homes than other races (31% versus 41% to 49%). And U.S.-born smokers are less likely than those born abroad to have a smoke-free policy (36% versus 54%).

The report also shows that approximately one in five of the city's *nonsmoking* adults (18%) reported being exposed to secondhand smoke at home in 2008. Previous research suggests that 57% of the city's nonsmoking adults have tobacco byproducts in their bodies, indicating exposure to second-hand smoke in some indoor or outdoor location. The new report does not include data on children per se, but it shows that 150,000 of the city's 1 million smokers allow smoking in homes they share with children younger than 18. In addition, the 2009 Child Health Survey – a survey of children's parents – found that an estimated 119,000 children ages 12 and younger (9%) live in a home where someone smokes at least occasionally.

Among nonsmokers, younger adults are more likely than older adults to be exposed at home. Some 28% of the city's 18- to 24-year-old nonsmokers are exposed at home, compared with just 16% of those 25 and older. Black and Asian nonsmokers report more exposure than whites (both 21% versus 15%), and nonsmokers with high school education or less are at greater risk than who have attended at least some college (21% versus 14%).

More and more New Yorkers have made their homes smoke-free since 2002. In 2008, three quarters of the city's 6 million adults (80% of nonsmokers and 42% of smokers) had smoke-free policies in their homes. In 2002, the proportions were just 71% and 27%. But 1.5 million New York City adults have yet to clear the smoke from their homes. Despite the 2002 New York City Smoke Free Air Act, some New Yorkers are also still being exposed at work. In 2007, among all employed adults in New York City, 7% of the nonsmokers (about 181,000) reported being exposed to secondhand

smoke at their workplace.

Tips on creating a smoke-free home

- Ask others not to smoke near your children, even outside.
- Never smoke in your car and do not let others smoke there.
- Make your whole home smoke-free (not just a couple of rooms). Moving to another room, opening a window, or using a fan or air filter does NOT protect people.
- Have all the smokers you live with sign a pledge to keep your home smoke-free.
- Remove ashtrays, lighters and matches from your home.
- Have low-calorie or sugar-free gum or candy available as an alternative to smoking. Or try cutting up fresh fruit and raw vegetables for people to snack on.
- Let them know you're rejecting the smoke, not the smoker.
- Be polite but firm. If people must smoke, insist that they do it outside.
- Thank people for helping keep your home smoke-free.
- Keep your home smoke-free even when no one else is around. Second-hand smoke lingers long after a cigarette is put out.

Quit smoking tips

- Set a quit date and mark it on your calendar. Get rid of ashtrays, lighters and cigarettes.
- Visit your doctor for support and advice with your quit plan.
- Make a list of reasons why you want to quit.
- Make a list of family and friends who will support you.
- Avoid triggers, including alcohol, caffeine and other smokers.
- Exercise to relieve stress and improve your mood. Try a brisk 30-minute walk at least four days a week
- Consider using a safe nicotine alternative such as replacement patches, gum or lozenges, all of which can double your chance of quitting.
- Having a smoke-free home can make it easier to quit smoking

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