

The Washington Post

SATURDAY READY TO RENT

YOUR GUIDE TO RENTAL APARTMENTS • HOUSES • AND MORE • SATURDAY, APRIL 3, 2010



Smoke-free Apartments: A Healthy Choice for Renters

If you value a smoke-free living environment, you probably know that smoke-free buildings help to protect you and your family's health from the hazards associated with secondhand smoke. Did you know that a building that is smoke-free is much less likely to catch fire? More and more renters are saying "YES!" to smoke-free living and are making it an important factor in deciding where to live. *Continued on page 5.*

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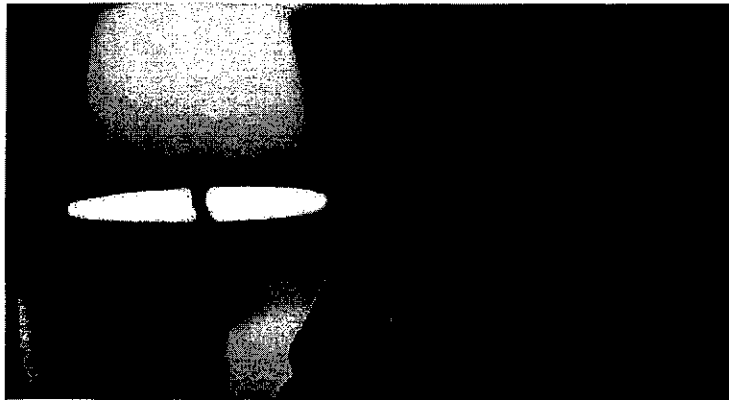
How do I find a no-smoking apartment building?

Whenever you call or visit a property, ask these questions about smoking policies:

1. If the property is smoke-free, find out if the policy applies to everyone or just new tenants. Ask if the non-smoking rule covers indoor common areas, rental units and any areas outside.

2. Ask if there are any tenants who currently smoke inside or out, and where they smoke. If they are smoking anywhere in the building and there is shared ventilation, it is likely that secondhand smoke will get into your unit. If they smoke outside near your windows or doors, it could also drift inside your unit.

3. Ask about enforcement. Does the landlord check to make sure no one is smoking? How would the landlord respond if you made



a complaint about a neighbor smoking? If a tenant or their guest is smoking, what would the landlord do about it?

4. Are signs posted to make visitors aware of the no-smoking rule?

5. Did the previous tenant smoke? If so, what did the landlord do to clean the apartment? Restoration companies strongly recommend

that after a smoker moves out, landlords remove and replace things like carpeting and curtains, and clean all appliances, bath and lighting fixtures, tub surrounds, bath vanities and all door and window openings.

What if I already live in a building that allows smoking?

It is important to have an open

dialogue with your landlord if you are having a problem with secondhand smoke. If no one speaks up, landlords assume that there is no problem.

Here are some tips on how to talk to both your landlord and neighbors.
www.smoke-freehousingNW.com.

1. Inform your landlord in writing that you are having a problem with secondhand smoke, and keep copies of all correspondence. It would be wise to send things by certified mail with a return receipt. Also, your landlord might not know the business benefits associated with going smoke-free—you can print off a landlord guide that describes these benefits at: www.smokefreehousingNW.com.

2. If you are having a health problem related to the secondhand smoke, ask your doctor to write a letter documenting the problem and send a copy to your landlord.

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www.RentDittmar.com

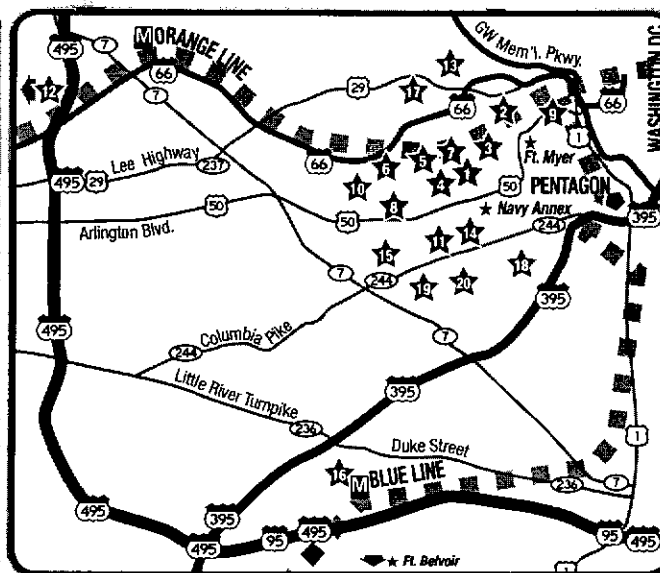
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Continued from page 5.

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3. Ask other tenants if they are having a problem with secondhand smoke. Tell them to voice their concerns to the landlord. You can demonstrate your community's demand for smoke-free living by delivering a petition with signatures to the landlord.

4. If you have a disability that you think is related to secondhand smoke, you may ask your landlord for "reasonable accommodations" to allow you to use your housing just like everybody else. In this instance, reasonable accommodations might include such things as adopting a no-smoking rule for your building, being moved to a non-smoking building, providing separate ventilation or sealing off your apartment. Check with your local Fair Housing Council for help. If you are unable to remedy the problem at your current building and decide to move to a smoke-free building, let the landlord know the smoke is the reason you're moving—they need to hear that they are losing business because of secondhand smoke.

While you are working on a long-term solution to secondhand smoke, here are some "quick fixes" to help you during that time period. Please be aware that none of these methods are 100% effective in reducing secondhand smoke.

1. Talk to the smoking neighbor:

- Your neighbor may not realize that his or her smoke is a problem for you. Politely let your neighbor know that smoke is coming into your apartment.
- Ask them if they would mind smoking outside or in another room so that the smoke does not get into your apartment.
- Ask them if they would be willing to have their unit insulated and sealed off, as described in Step 3.

2. Ask your landlord to improve air filtration:

- Add more fresh air intake into the ventilation system.
- Clean, change, or install better filters in the ventilation system.
- Restrict the amount of air exhausted through the ventilation system from the residences of tenants who smoke.

3. Seal off your apartment and the smoker's apartment:

- Install door sweeps.
- Fill or patch any cracks in the walls.
- Insulate the air spaces around plumbing pipes.
- Insulate and place outlet covers over electrical outlets.

4. Ask your landlord to move you to another unit that does not have any smoking neighbors.

I'm ready to quit smoking—what's the next step?

If you are a smoker and are ready to quit or you know of someone who smokes and is ready to quit, call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for general information about the benefits of smoke-free housing, as well as additional resources for renters, visit www.smokefreehousing.org

About this section: This editorial was produced by The Washington Post special sections department in conjunction with Apartments.com and did not involve the editorial department of this newspaper.

This editorial was contributed by Apartments.com. Visit Apartment Living on Apartments.com (<http://living.apartments.com>) for everything you need to know about living in an apartment. Browse useful information on landlords, leases, budgeting, moving, gardening, decorating and more.



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