

HEALTH

Drivers' smoking give passengers high levels of secondhand smoke

Oct 15, 2012 6:30 PM



Smoking tobacco while driving might seem harmless. But smoking drivers are subjecting themselves—and their passengers—to extremely unhealthy levels of air pollution, say scientists.

The study, conducted by British researchers and due to be published in the journal *Tobacco Control*, was the largest of its kind and examined more than 100 car trips made by 17 drivers, 14 of whom were smokers. Thirty-four of the trips were smoke-free and averaged about 7.4 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$), well below the 25 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ safe level as recommended by the United Nations' World Health Organization.

But in trips with smoking drivers, scientists found [interior pollution](#) averaged 85 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. The levels of particulates in the car's interior varied according to the number of cigarettes smoked and the length of the trip. But the study says that peak levels of pollution averaged about 385 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ for trips with smokers. And on one occasion, scientists found a reading as high as 880 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. What's more, even with the cars' air conditioning on or the windows open for ventilation, passengers were still exposed to air pollution levels that exceeded WHO's guidelines.

"Children are likely to be at greater risk from [secondhand smoke] exposure due to their faster breathing rates, less developed immune system and their inability to move away from the source in many home and car settings," wrote the study authors.

Several states, including Arkansas, California, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maine, and Maryland, and countries have banned or are considering banning drivers

smoking in private cars.

Smoking tobacco can lead to [lung cancer](#) and other medical conditions. Use our advice to [learn how to quit smoking](#).

Sources: [Secondhand smoke in cars](#) [Tobacco Control] [Arkansas Law Bans Smoking With Kids In Car](#) [ABCNews, Fort Smith - Fayetteville, Ark.] [Should it be illegal to smoke in your own car?](#) [Los Angeles Times] [Maryland Senate passes bill banning smoking in cars holding young passengers](#) [The Washington Post]

—*Paul Eng*

<http://news.consumerreports.org/health/2012/10/drivers-smoking-give-passengers-second-hand-smoke-in-spades.html>