

Berrien County Health Department Brings Awareness to Dangers of Thirdhand Smoke

Benton Harbor, Michigan, March 1, 2022 – The Berrien County Health Department Substance Use Disorder Prevention Team is bringing awareness to the dangers of thirdhand smoke during the month of February.

The February campaign is designed to discourage children and teens from smoking or vaping by highlighting the harmful effects that thirdhand smoke has on young people, their friends, families, children and the community. While many residents and community members are aware of the negative impacts of secondhand smoke, thirdhand smoke has been historically less emphasized.

Firsthand smoke refers to the direct impact on the person smoking or vaping. Secondhand smoke refers to the impact on all people who inhale someone else's smoke.

Less well known, thirdhand smoke refers to the particles that settle out when a smoker exhales. These particles coat surfaces, which can be picked up, ingested or inhaled by anyone but pose the greatest risk to growing children.

In children, thirdhand smoke exposure can increase risk of respiratory and infectious illnesses including asthma, bronchiolitis and pneumonia. Compounds within thirdhand smoke also are known to be genotoxic, which means they can damage the DNA within the cells of exposed tissue.

More than 95% of children living in homes considered smoke-free carry detectable levels of nicotine on their hands, which means thousands of toxicants found in tobacco smoke is finding its way into growing kids even though parents are trying to keep the smoke out.

Families can protect themselves from thirdhand smoke by:

- Keeping your home and car free of smoke
- Controlling dust by wiping surfaces and vacuuming frequently
- Replacing old carpet
- Advocating for smoking bans in apartment buildings
- Asking about the smoking history of homes or apartments you're moving into
- Avoid buying used furniture from homes where there are known smokers

For more information about the Thirdhand Smoke Awareness Campaign, contact Shannon Larry-Burton at 269.927.5692 or visit thirdhandsmoke.org.

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