

What RENTERS Can Do When they are exposed to secondhand smoke at home

If secondhand smoke is drifting into your home from a neighbor's, your health may be at risk. You are not alone, more than one in five Oregon renters living in multi-unit buildings are exposed to their neighbor's smoke. Here are some steps you can take:

1. Talk to the neighbor you think is smoking. Politely let them know that smoke is coming into your home. Ask them if they would please smoke outside and away from doors and windows.
2. Write a letter to your landlord documenting the problem (see sample landlord letter). Encourage him or her to follow the trend and adopt a no-smoking policy for the property. There are many great business reasons to do so besides protecting your health.
3. If you or family members are having health problems caused by secondhand smoke, you can have your doctor write a letter documenting the problem. Send a copy to your landlord. Keep written documentation of all correspondence with the landlord on this matter.
4. Ask your neighbors if they are having similar problems with secondhand smoke. Encourage them to voice their complaints as well.
5. If one has a disability as defined by fair housing law, he or she may be able to ask for a "reasonable accommodation" or "reasonable modification" to allow him or her to make full use and enjoyment of the home. Reasonable modifications are structural changes made to a unit that are necessary because of one's disability. Reasonable accommodations are changes in the rules, policies, and practices that necessary because of one's disability. In the case of secondhand smoke, a resident with asthma or heart disease whose condition is made worse by the presence of secondhand smoke might request a no-smoking rule be adopted or ask to be moved to a non-smoking building. Please note that the only way to avoid the health hazards of secondhand smoke is to live in a smoke-free building.