

Cigars in Apartments and Condominiums

First, A Little History:

In early 20th Century America, men who smoked cigarettes were considered weak. Cigar smokers were thought to be more masculine, successful and strong. In addition, for many years, cigars, unlike cigarettes and other tobacco products, did not carry warning labels. For that reason, many who smoked cigars vehemently defended their “right” to smoke cigars wherever they pleased and for as long as they pleased.

But warning labels finally were required in the year 2001 by the Federal Trade Commission. The nation’s seven leading cigar firms agreed to rotate a series of five warnings in all their advertisements and on cigar packages. These firms manufacture 95% of the nation’s cigars and are responsible for the majority of imported cigars.

The warning labels are as follows:

- Cigar Smoking Can Cause Cancers of the Mouth and Throat, Even if You Do Not Inhale
- Cigar Smoking Can Cause Lung Cancer and Heart Disease
- Tobacco Use Increases the Risk of Infertility, Stillbirth, and Low Birth Weight
- Cigars Are Not a Safe Alternative to Cigarettes
- Tobacco Smoke Increases the Risk of Lung Cancer and Heart Disease, Even in Nonsmokers.

Unfortunately, when cigars are sold individually, which is legal, warning labels are not included in the packaging. And there are still myths about using cigars such as, “Cigars won’t hurt you if you don’t inhale.”

During the 1990’s, the use of cigars was marketed as a stylish and luxurious activity. Cigar lounges opened in high income communities, a glossy magazine devoted entirely to cigar consumption (*Cigar Aficionado*) began to be published, and pictures of famous movie stars, especially glamorous women, and powerful people were seen in the media smoking cigars.

Although electronic cigarette stores and hookah bars now seem to dominate areas frequented by young adults, cigars are still very popular. But in the last 10 years, they have changed in size, appearance and smell because of the flavorings which have been added. But they are still cigars and they are still not safe for the user or the nearby non-smoker. There are three major cigar products: little cigars, cigarillos and cigars. The main difference between cigars and cigarettes is that the tobacco in a cigar is wrapped in leaf tobacco.

Managing Cigar Smoke

Because of the history and marketing of cigars plus the changes that have been made in size and the flavorings that have been added, many people who use them will complain vigorously that they are not dangerous to the user or to the residents of adjacent units.

However, there is ample evidence that cigar smoke is as dangerous, and even more dangerous than cigarette smoke. It will move from unit to unit when people are smoking inside, and also will be pulled into adjacent units when people are smoking them outside. Although cigars and cigarillos which are sold individually may not contain warning labels, management should be prepared to provide correct information about the health risks.

According to scientist James Repace, cigars don't burn as hot or as thoroughly as cigarettes, so what you get is a lot more carbon monoxide than cigarettes tend to make. A medium-sized cigar, six inches long and thick as your little finger, says Repace, would produce five times as much tar pollution as some cigarettes and about 25 times as much carbon monoxide. You could easily exceed the Environmental Protection Agency's carbon monoxide standards in a room the size of a standard bedroom within 10 minutes. The same is not true about cigarettes.

A strong cigarette contains 1.1 mg of nicotine. A cigar can contain anywhere from 10 to 444 mg of nicotine. For that reason, cigars may be more addictive than cigarettes.

According to the California Department of Public Health, cigar smoke has the same poisons and cancer causing substances found in cigarette smoke. Secondhand cigar smoke can cause cancer and heart disease in nonsmokers. It can cause other health problems in children and unborn babies. One cigar can have as much tobacco as several cigarettes because of the size. Also, because of its size, it can take as long as one hour to smoke a cigar. But it can take as much as five hours for the secondhand cigar smoke to clear from indoor air if it has been smoked inside. This exposes others to the smoke for longer periods. The chemicals in cigar smoke, like the chemicals in cigarette smoke, will stick to surfaces including furniture, rugs, walls, and floors.

Clearly, the use of the many kinds of cigars, whatever their size or flavorings, needs to be regulated as strongly as the use of cigarettes in apartments and condominiums.

Prepared by the Smokefree Apartment House Registry
P.O. Box 246, Newbury Park, CA 91319
A project of Smokefree Air For Everyone (S.A.F.E.)
818-363-4220 www.smokefreeapartments.org

This material was made possible by funds received from the California Department of Public Health under contract 10-10206-10.