

# Smoking bans may not rid casinos of smoke

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(HealthDay)—Toxic residue from smoking remains on surfaces inside a casino for months after smoking has been banned there, a new study has found.

"Casinos are unusual environments because of the amount of [smoking](#) that takes place 24/7 over long periods of time," said the study's lead author, Georg Matt. He is a psychology professor at San Diego State University.

"Over years of smoking, layers of smoke residue stick to surfaces and penetrate deep into materials," Matt said in a university news release.

"If you work at a casino that allows smoking or are a guest, you already know you inhale secondhand smoke every time you breathe. Because the tobacco smoke residue remains long after a smoking ban, you will continue to get exposed even after the secondhand smoke has disappeared," he explained.

That's important for the health and well-being of casino staff and frequent guests, the researchers said. It also suggests that casinos should ban smoking sooner rather than later, they added.

The study was conducted in a casino near Redding, Calif., that opened in 1993 and banned smoking for 11 months in 2014, before lifting the ban.

The researchers analyzed surface samples taken from eight areas inside the casino twice before the smoking ban took effect and six times while the ban was in effect.

The investigators found a significant reduction in the tobacco smoke residue—called [thirdhand smoke](#)—in carpets and on walls and furniture in the casino six months after smoking was banned. However, levels were still higher than those in hotels or homes where smoking was not allowed.

The "casino was much more polluted with thirdhand smoke than any nonsmoker home we have examined to date," Matt said. "That is,

nonsmokers are at risk of being exposed to higher concentration of thirdhand smoke in a [casino](#) than they would in a thirdhand smoke-polluted home."

The only way casinos can eliminate this health threat to workers and guests after introducing a [smoking ban](#) is through intensive cleaning or replacement of surfaces, Matt said. That includes carpets, furniture, equipment, wallpaper, drywall, drapery and curtains. Washing and vacuuming the walls, floors and ceilings also would be needed.

"Tobacco should never be smoked indoors unless you are prepared to pay the price for extensive clean up," Matt said. "The sooner you stop smoking indoors, the sooner you will benefit from clean air and the less it will cost to clean up the toxic legacy."

The study was published online recently in the journal *Tobacco Control*.

**More information:** The American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation has more on [thirdhand smoke](#).

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