

## Oh, for a smoke

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## WITH A BAN ON PUBLIC SMOKING, PASSIVE SMOKERS CAN BREATHE EASY

Jasmine Latkar

**A**fter much debate, view and counterviews, the Central government has finally imposed a ban on smoking in public and workplaces. Imposed under the Prohibition of Smoking in Public Places Rules, 2008, the ban came into force from October 2, mainly to protect individuals from the hazards of second-hand smoke or passive smoking.

In accordance with this new law, smoking is strictly prohibited in restaurants, hotels, coffee shops, pubs, airports, shopping malls, theaters, auditoriums, hospitals and educational

institutions.

Dr Prakash Gupta, a leading medical practitioner explains, "Smoking is extremely dangerous to non-smokers as well. This Act has been passed in order to protect non-smokers and to ensure smoke-free public and work places for them. Passive smoke contains class A carcinogens which are extremely harmful to passive smokers, especially children. Haz-

ards of second-hand smoke are quite significant. They increase the risk of lung cancer by 20 per cent. A recent study in the USA suggests that every year there are 5,000 extra lung cancer patients and 40,000 deaths because of second hand smoke."

Smoking may be permitted in hotels with 30 rooms or more, restaurants with seating capacity of thirty or more persons, and airports, but only in rooms physically separated and covered by full height walls on all sides and having an air system that is exhausted directly on the outside having negative pressure and certain other specifications. Individuals in charge of public places are held responsible for smoking in these areas.

The penalties include a fine as also a possible criminal sanction. The authorities of the respective places are responsible for the reinforcement of the law like the post masters for post offices, library heads, assistants and librarians for libraries, institutional heads for the various institutes and so on.

Passive smoking can lead to lung cancer, heart diseases, low births and chronic lung diseases. Second-hand smoke consists of 4000 chemical compounds, including 69 known carcinogens. These enter the air that we breathe. Article 8.1 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) states that "scientific evidence has unequivocally established that exposure to tobacco smoke causes death, disease and disability".

As per a study in Japan, it was seen that wives of smokers have double the risk of lung cancer than that of non-smoker wives.