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The Tenacity of Third-Hand Smoke

Recently I found a moving box full of my mother's recipes. When I opened the box, I was hit with the smell of stale, old, cigarette smoke. My mother was a smoker for over 45 years, so the smell makes sense. What you should also know is that she died over 20 years ago. That's how long the smells can linger from the residual parts of cigarette smoke.



Cleaning her home after she died, I had to use a full strength cleaner without diluting it in water, then rinse. One pail of water would last for a section about 8x3 feet. Then I'd have to replace it because the water would be brown from the tar and nicotine on the walls and surfaces.

There is actually a name for it: third-hand smoke. First-hand smoke is what the smokers breathe in and exhale. Second-hand smoke is the exhaled smoke that others breathe in, and third-hand smoke is the residual smoke and chemicals left in the environment. They cover every nook and cranny in a home, soak into the fabrics, and stain some surfaces beyond repair. Does this third-hand smoke contain toxins that can harm us? More on Saturday.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

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