

Smoking in Canada Backgrounder

A Global Threat

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death worldwide.¹ Although many smokers would like to quit to prevent further damage to their health, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that only five per cent of smokers trying to quit achieve lasting abstinence without help or support.² It is believed that most smokers continue to smoke, not out of choice, but because they are addicted to nicotine.³ Nicotine addiction is a chronic, relapsing medical condition.⁴

- Worldwide, approximately 1.3 billion people smoke cigarettes.¹
- Approximately five million people die of smoking-related diseases each year worldwide.⁵
- Every eight seconds a person dies of a smoking-related disease.⁶

The Impact of Smoking on Canadians

Almost five million Canadians, or 19 per cent of the population 15 years and older, smoke.⁷ According to Health Canada, close to half of smokers will die from smoking before they turn 70 years old.⁸ A major public health issue is that tobacco kills approximately 37,000 Canadians a year.⁸

Smoking has multi-systemic consequences affecting the entire body.⁹ It is the single most important preventable cause of lung cancer, contributing to 85 per cent of all new cases in Canada.¹⁰ In 2004, almost 14,000 Canadian smokers suffered from lung cancer compared to only 361 non-smokers.¹¹

Smoking also increases a person's risk of developing heart disease and stroke by contributing to build up of plaque in arteries, increased risk of blood clots, blood pressure and reduced oxygen in the blood.¹² In 2004, almost 9,300 Canadian smokers over the age of 35 suffered from a heart attack compared with approximately 750 non-smokers.¹¹

The respiratory symptoms associated with smoking include coughing, phlegm, wheezing and difficulty breathing, and can lead to Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) over time.¹⁰

Second Hand Smoke

Second hand smoke is also dangerous.¹³ It releases the same toxic chemicals, approximately 4,000 in total, as smoke that is inhaled directly, but a greater quantity.¹³ Second hand smoke also contains twice as much tar and five times as much carbon monoxide, which reduces the amount of oxygen in the body.^{14, 15}

Regular exposure to second hand smoke can increase a person's risk of contracting lung disease by 25 per cent and heart disease by 10 per cent,¹⁴ and is linked to the deaths of at least 1,000 Canadians every year.¹³

For additional information, please contact:

Christian Marcoux
Pfizer Canada Inc
514-426-6985
christian.marcoux@pfizer.com

Elisabeth Mozel/Jacqueline Zonneville
NATIONAL Public Relations
416-586-0180/416-848-1398
emozel@national.ca/izonneville@national.ca

References

- ¹ The Facts About Smoking and Health. World Health Organization. http://www.wpro.who.int/media_centre/fact_sheets/fs_20060530.htm. Accessed June 2008.
- ² WHO European Strategy for Smoking Cessation Policy. <http://www.euro.who.int/Document/E80056.pdf>. Accessed June 2008.
- ³ Nicotine Addiction in Britain (2000). Royal College of Physicians, London. <http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/pubs/books/nicotine/contributors.htm>. Accessed June 2008.
- ⁴ Facts About Nicotine and Tobacco Products. National Institute on Drug Abuse. Volume 13(3). http://www.drugabuse.gov/NIDA_Notes/NNVol13N3/tearoff.html. Accessed June 2008.
- ⁵ Tobacco. World Health Organization. http://www.wpro.who.int/health_topics/tobacco/. Accessed June 2008.
- ⁶ Country Profiles. Tobacco or Health 2000. World Health Organization. <http://www.wpro.who.int/NR/rdonlyres/751257EA-1037-4E62-98F7-EBEEE278ADAF/0/countryprofiles2000.pdf>. Accessed June 2008.
- ⁷ Health Canada. Smoking Rates: Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey (CTUMS). http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/tobac-tabac/research-recherche/stat/ctums-esutc_2006_e.html. Accessed May 2008.
- ⁸ Overview of Health Risks of Smoking. Health Canada. http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/tobac-tabac/res/news-nouvelles/risks-risques_e.html. Accessed May 2008.
- ⁹ Health Canada. Written Pleadings Filed by the Attorney General of Canada with the Quebec Superior Court. <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/pubs/tobac-tabac/pleadings-argumentation/cac-acc-eng.php>. Accessed July 2008.
- ¹⁰ Smoking and Your Body. Health Canada. http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/tobac-tabac/body-corps/index_e.html. Accessed June 2008.
- ¹¹ Estimated tobacco-caused deaths in Canada. Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada. <http://www.smoke-free.ca/factsheets/pdf/smokingdeaths.pdf>. Accessed June 2008.
- ¹² Smoking, Heart Disease and Stroke. Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. <http://www2.heartandstroke.ca/Page.asp?PageID=1975&ArticleID=5214&Src=heart&From=SubCategory>. Accessed June 2008.
- ¹³ Second-hand Smoke is Dangerous. Canadian Cancer Society. http://www.cancer.ca/ccs/internet/standard/0,3182,3172_13127_langId-en,00.html. Accessed May 2008.
- ¹⁴ Second-hand Smoking: FAQs and Facts. Health Canada. http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/tobac-tabac/second/fact-fait/index_e.html. Accessed May 2008.
- ¹⁵ Smoking and Tobacco. The Lung Association. http://www.lung.ca/protect-protegez/tobacco-tabagisme/second-secondaire/index_e.php. Accessed July 2008.