

2014 Surgeon General's Report: New Facts and Statistics

The 2014 Surgeon General's, "The Health Consequences of Smoking – 50 Years of Progress,"¹ released to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1964 Surgeon General's on Smoking and Health, presented many facts about smoking over the last 50 years, linked smoking and secondhand smoke to new diseases/conditions and updated many of the statistics on tobacco use. Below are some of the key facts and statistics from the report.

The Increasing Toll of Tobacco:

- Tobacco use is more deadly than it was 50 years ago.
- Smoking and secondhand smoke are now responsible for more than 480,000, or close to half a million, premature deaths annually.
- Between 1965 and 2014, almost 18 million people died from diseases caused by smoking and another 2.5 million died from secondhand smoke exposure, bringing the total deaths caused by tobacco to 20 million.
- If current trends continue, 5.6 million of today's youth under age 18 will die prematurely during adulthood from their smoking.
- Economic costs due to smoking in the U.S. are now estimated to be at least \$289 billion and could be up to \$333 billion annually, including at least \$130 billion from direct medical care of adults and \$150 billion from lost productivity.
- Smoking shortens lives far more than most other risk factors for early death; smokers are estimated to lose more than a decade of life on average.
- Significant disparities in tobacco use persist among certain racial/ethnic populations, including: people who have low educational levels and/or low incomes, by geographic region, the LGBT population and persons with severe mental illness.
- Smokers have poorer health than non-smokers, which impacts their quality of life but also impacts their participation at work and increases their healthcare costs.

Smoking Causes More Diseases and Conditions:

- Smoking was linked to a number of new diseases and conditions in the report, including liver and colorectal cancers and type 2 diabetes.
- The Surgeon General causally links smoking to increased risk for both becoming ill and dying from tuberculosis.
- The report suggests that youth smoking may cause asthma. Smoking also has been found to make asthma in adults worse, and the Surgeon General has evidence that suggests it may make asthma in children of all ages worse.
- It isn't just smoking that causes health problems: the Surgeon General suggests that nicotine exposure during adolescence may have lasting adverse health consequences for brain development.

Smoking is Deadly to Our Lungs

Lung Cancer:

- More than 87% of all lung cancer deaths are caused by smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Smokers are more likely to develop lung cancer today than they were 50 years ago, despite smoking fewer cigarettes overall.
- Disease risks from smoking have risen dramatically for women over the last 50 years, and are now equal to those for men for lung cancer.
- From 1959 to 2010, the risk of developing lung cancer increased tenfold for women and doubled among men. The Surgeon General states that the composition and design of the cigarette may account for both the increase in lung cancer risk and the shift in the types of lung cancer that now occur.
- The risk of nonsmokers developing lung cancer has not changed since 1959.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD):

- More than 61% of all pulmonary disease deaths are caused by smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Disease risks from smoking have risen dramatically for women over the last 50 years, and are now equal to those for men for COPD.
- The number of women dying from COPD has now surpassed the number of men. The Surgeon General has evidence that suggests that women who smoke may develop more severe COPD earlier in life.
- Women smokers are more than 22 times more likely than women never smokers to die from COPD.

Exposure to Secondhand Smoke is Deadly:

- Between 1965 and 2014, 2.5 million people died due to exposure to secondhand smoke, including 263,000 from lung cancer caused by secondhand smoke.
- Lost productivity from exposure to secondhand smoke is estimated for the first time ever at \$5.6 billion per year.
- Secondhand smoke is definitively linked to stroke for the first time.

Quitting Smoking is the single best thing a person can do to lengthen and improve their lives:

- Quitting smoking by 40 years of age reduces the early loss of life from smoking by about 90 percent on average; quitting by about 60 years of age reduces the loss by 40 percent.
- Quitting smoking entirely is much more effective at stopping premature loss of life from smoking than reducing the number of cigarettes smoked per day.
- In the U.S. today, there are more former smokers than current smokers and success rates have been increasing among recent generations.
- Current quit smoking treatments are effective across a wide population of smokers, including smokers with significant mental and physical diseases.

The Tobacco Industry Bears Responsibility....

- A major conclusion of the report states “The tobacco epidemic was initiated and has been sustained by the aggressive strategies of the tobacco industry, which has deliberately misled the public on the risks of smoking cigarettes.”
- Changes made by the cigarette industry to the design of the cigarette may account for both the increase in lung cancer risk and the shift in the types of lung cancer that now occur.
- Tobacco industry marketing and promotions cause and continue youth and young adult smoking.

...But So Do Our Political Leaders For Failing to Implement Proven Policies

- Tobacco control measures are proven to be efficacious
- Litigation against the tobacco companies has reduced tobacco use. (Reminder: The American Lung Association is a plaintiff-intervenor in the RICO lawsuit against the major companies.)
- Increasing the price of taxes prevents kids from starting to smoke, promotes quitting and reduces prevalence among youth and adults.
- Mass media campaigns, comprehensive community programs, and comprehensive statewide tobacco control programs keep youth from starting to use tobacco and reduce prevalence among youth and adults.
- Smokefree indoor air policies are effective in reducing exposure to secondhand smoke and lead to less smoking among covered individuals.
- Access to barrier-free proven tobacco use cessation treatment including counseling and medication to all smokers, especially those with other significant mental and physical diseases should be implemented.

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014.