

Smoking in Connecticut

Smoking is an important issue for both the United States and Connecticut. In 2006, smoking killed more people in the United States than AIDS, alcohol, vehicular accidents, and homicide combined [7]. In Connecticut, 16% of adults (about 430,200) smoke, while the national average is 20.6% [1]. Of these Connecticut smokers, 4,785 die each year because of smoking-related causes. Smoking is widely regarded as one of the most severe, yet preventable, causes of death.

Smoking's Effect on Health

Cigarettes contain over 200 toxins and 60 carcinogens, including Lead, Mercury, and Ammonia [7]. Smoking increases the risk of [5]:

Coronary heart disease by 2 to 4 times

Stroke by 2 to 4 times

Men developing **lung cancer** by 23 times

Women developing **lung cancer** by 13 times

Dying from **chronic obstructive lung diseases** by 12 to 13 times

Second-hand smoke increases nonsmokers' risk of developing heart disease by 25-30% [7] and can also cause death from lung cancer (3,423-8,866 annual deaths in the U.S.) and childhood asthma, among other illnesses. [7]

Underage Smoking

Despite state laws that prohibit tobacco sales to people under the age of 18, 21.1%, or 42,200, of Connecticut high school students smoke and each year, 4,000 more children under the age of 18 start smoking. [1] In addition, 186,000 kids are exposed to second-hand smoke in Connecticut [1] and 40% of current Connecticut smokers started before the age of 15 [7].

Public Funding for Tobacco Prevention Programs

Comprehensive, statewide tobacco prevention programs can effectively reduce smoking rates [9,10]. The current state cigarette tax is \$3 per pack of 20 cigarettes, and total tobacco-generated revenue (from settlement payments and tobacco taxes) will amount to \$494.0 million for fiscal year 2010 [1]. The CDC recommends that Connecticut spend at least \$43.9 million in 2010 on comprehensive tobacco prevention programs, however the state will spend about \$7.2 million on such programs in 2010 [1]. Currently, tobacco companies spend about \$123 million on marketing in Connecticut [1].

Public Costs of Smoking

The detrimental effects of smoking on Connecticut residents' health leads to higher Medicaid expenditures and losses in tax revenue and economic productivity. It is estimated that the real cost per pack of cigarettes in Connecticut is \$14.30: \$8.81 in Medical Costs and \$5.49 in Lost Productivity & Taxes. Overall, the annual health care costs due to smoking amount to \$2 billion in Connecticut [7].

Medicaid

About 37,800 of Connecticut Medicaid recipients smoke [7]. Annual Medicaid health care expenditures on smoking-related causes total \$507 million [7]. It is estimated that if all smokers in Connecticut quit smoking, the annual state Medicaid expenditure five years afterwards would be \$181 million lower than without smoking cessation [6]. In addition, Connecticut is one of five states where Medicaid does not cover smoking cessation programs [8].

Anti-Tobacco Policies and Programs

To protect citizens from second hand smoke, the Connecticut state legislature instituted the Clean Indoor Air Act [11] in 2003. This law prohibits smoking in:

- Workplaces with 5 or more employees
- All restaurants, bars, retail food stores, hospitals, and many other establishments

The Connecticut Department of Public Health also funds the CT Quit Line, which provides 5 free telephone smoking cessation sessions and written materials to help smokers quit. People can call (866) 363-4224 on Monday-Sunday: 8am- 3am for counseling. It is estimated that a \$2 million investment in this quit line can produce 3,186 fewer smokers annually. [7]. In fact, brief smoking cessation counseling and a nicotine patch cost \$2,000 per year of life saved [7].

In the private sector, financial incentives for employees to stop smoking can **triple** smoking cessation than if employers only provide educational materials [12].

In its report, *Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs*, the Centers for Disease Control provide 9 recommendations for effective, statewide tobacco control programs which include school programs, counter-marketing against tobacco companies, and enforcement.

Nelson Mendoza
CT Health Policy Project Fellow
May 2010

References:

[1] <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/reports/settlements/toll.php?StateID=CT>

[2] <http://www.ct.gov/drs/cwp/view.asp?A=1510&Q=446976>

[3] <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5802a2.htm>

[4] http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/state_data/data_highlights/2006/pdfs/dataHighlights06table4.pdf Table 4

[5] http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/effects_cig_smoking/

[6] Legacy Foundation

http://www.legacyforhealth.org/PDFPublications/saving_lives_saving_money.pdf

[7] (slideshow)

http://www.ct.gov/sustinet/lib/sustinet/taskforces/tobaccotaskforce/january_19_smoking_pres.pdf

[8] (Kaiser report)

<http://www.statehealthfacts.org/comparemaptable.jsp?typ=2&ind=80&cat=2&sub=24&sortc=1&o=a>

[9] (Surgeon's report)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Reducing Tobacco Use: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta: Department of Health and Human Services, 2000.

[10] IOM's report

Institute of Medicine. *State Programs Can Reduce Tobacco Use*. Washington, DC: National Research Council, 2000.

[11] Smoking Ban <http://ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3137&q=388054&dphNav=%7C>

[12] NEngland Journal of Medicine <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/short/360/7/699>