

POWER OF PREVENTION

The Health and Economic Benefits of Preventing Chronic Diseases



TOBACCO USE

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable disease, disability, and death in the United States. Cigarette smoking harms nearly every organ of the body and causes cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung diseases, and type 2 diabetes.

Secondhand smoke also causes stroke, lung cancer, and coronary heart disease in adults. Children who are exposed to secondhand smoke are at increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome, impaired lung function, acute respiratory infections, middle ear disease, and more frequent and severe asthma attacks.

Tobacco Use in the United States

- About 34 million US adults smoke cigarettes,¹ and 58 million nonsmoking Americans are exposed to secondhand smoke.²
- Every day, about 1,600 young people under 18 smoke their first cigarette, and more than 200 become daily cigarette smokers.^{3,4}
- Cigarette smoking causes more than 480,000 deaths every year, including 41,000 deaths from secondhand smoke.⁵
- Disparities related to commercial tobacco use, secondhand smoke exposure, and quitting exist across population groups. For example, American Indian and Alaska Native people have the highest prevalence of cigarette smoking compared to all other racial or ethnic groups in the United States.
- In 2019, 24.9% of adult Medicaid enrollees were current cigarette smokers, compared with 10.7% of adults with private health insurance, placing them at greater risk for smoking-related disease and death.¹

The Benefits of Using Proven Strategies

The Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF) reviews health interventions to determine which ones work and offer good value.* Its review of tobacco interventions found that:

- Comprehensive tobacco control programs can save money because the amount saved from reductions in smoking-related health care costs can be higher than the costs of adopting these programs.⁶
- A nationwide smokefree policy could save \$700 to \$1,297^(a) for each person not currently covered by a smokefree policy by preventing illness and reducing deaths from secondhand smoke exposure.⁷
- Interventions that increase the price of tobacco products by 20% can save an average of \$72.52^(a) per person per year in health care costs.⁸
- Communication interventions that reach large numbers of people save lives.⁹



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

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Strategies That Work

CDC is committed to improving health equity by reducing diseases and deaths caused by commercial tobacco use in all communities. These efforts can help reduce the costs of smoking.

The agency and its partners promote efforts to prevent young people from starting to smoke, create smokefree worksites and public spaces, connect everyone who wants to quit smoking to effective treatment, and reduce health disparities for groups at higher risk for chronic diseases caused by smoking.

For example, CDC's [National Tobacco Control Program](#) is the only nationwide initiative that supports all 50 states, the District of Columbia, 8 US territories and freely associated states, and 27 tribes and tribal organizations for the effective implementation of tobacco prevention and control interventions.

These efforts have resulted in strategies to protect Americans from the risks of tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure. For example:

TIPS® CDC's [Tips From Former Smokers®](#) (*Tips*®) campaign is the first federally funded tobacco education campaign focused on motivating US adults who smoke to try to quit. *Tips* features real people—not actors—who are living with serious health conditions caused by smoking and secondhand smoke exposure. During 2012-2018, CDC estimates that more than 16.4 million people who smoke have attempted to quit and about 1 million have quit because of the *Tips* campaign.¹⁰

 CDC also helps people stop using tobacco through 1-800-QUIT-NOW, a toll-free telephone line that routes callers to their state quitlines, which are available in every US state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam. Callers have access to free counseling and, in many states, free smoking cessation medications when eligible and available.

 61% of the US population is now protected by a comprehensive state or local [smokefree law](#).¹¹

CDC, states, and other partners have helped reduce cigarette smoking among US adults from 20.9% (about 1 in every 5 adults) in 2005 to 14.0% (nearly 1 in every 7 adults) in 2019.¹



OVER \$300
BILLION

annual cost of smoking-related
disease and death

The High Cost of Tobacco Use

- For every American who dies because of smoking, at least 30 are living with a serious smoking-related illness. That's over 16 million Americans.^{5,12}
- Smoking-related economic costs in the United States are more than \$300 billion^(b) each year. This includes more than \$225 billion^(c) in direct medical costs.¹²
- Smoking-attributable costs associated with premature death are more than \$156 billion^(d) each year and include \$5.6 billion in lost productivity due to secondhand smoke exposure.⁵
- Indoor smoking is associated with \$117^(e) in additional health care expenditures for respiratory conditions for each exposed child from birth to 4 years.¹³
- Globally, tobacco use leads to about \$1.4 trillion a year in health care costs and lost productivity.¹⁴

* The CPSTF considers interventions cost-effective if they cost less than \$50,000 per quality-adjusted life year gained.

‡ Costs were measured in ^a2011 US dollars, ^b2010 US dollars, ^c2014 US dollars, and ^d2007 US dollars, and ^e2004 US dollars. Older cost estimates are likely to be underestimates.