

Foreword

In 1964, the first Surgeon General's report on the effects of smoking on health was released. In the nearly 50 years since, extensive data from thousands of studies have consistently substantiated the devastating effects of smoking on the lives of millions of Americans. Yet today in the United States, tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of death and disease for both men and women. Now, this 2010 report of the Surgeon General explains beyond a shadow of a doubt how tobacco smoke causes disease, validates earlier findings, and expands and strengthens the science base. Armed with this irrefutable data, the time has come to mount a full-scale assault on the tobacco epidemic.

More than 1,000 people are killed every day by cigarettes, and one-half of all long-term smokers are killed by smoking-related diseases. A large proportion of these deaths are from early heart attacks, chronic lung diseases, and cancers. For every person who dies from tobacco use, another 20 Americans continue to suffer with at least one serious tobacco-related illness. But the harmful effects of smoking do not end with the smoker. Every year, thousands of nonsmokers die from heart disease and lung cancer, and hundreds of thousands of children suffer from respiratory infections because of exposure to secondhand smoke. There is no risk-free level of exposure to tobacco smoke, and there is no safe tobacco product.

This new Surgeon General's report describes in detail the ways tobacco smoke damages every organ in the body and causes disease and death. We must build on our successes and more effectively educate people about the health risks of tobacco use, prevent youth from ever using tobacco products, expand access to proven cessation treatments and services, and reduce exposure to secondhand smoke. Putting laws and other restrictions in place, including making tobacco products progressively less affordable, will ultimately lead to our goal of a healthier America by reducing the devastating effects of smoking.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and other federal agencies are diligently working toward this goal by implementing and supporting policies and regulations that strengthen our resolve to end the tobacco epidemic. CDC has incorporated the World Health Organization's MPOWER approach into its actions at the local, state, and national levels. MPOWER consists of six key interventions proven to reduce tobacco use that can prevent millions of deaths. CDC, along with federal, state, and local partners, is committed to monitoring the tobacco epidemic and prevention policies; protecting people from secondhand smoke where they live, work, and play; offering quit assistance to current smokers; warning about the dangers of tobacco; enforcing comprehensive restrictions on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship; and raising taxes and prices on tobacco products.

In 2009, the *Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act* was enacted, giving FDA explicit regulatory authority over tobacco products to protect and promote the health of the American public. Among other things, this historic legislation gave the agency the authority to require companies to reveal all of the ingredients in tobacco products—including the amount of nicotine—and to prohibit the sale of tobacco products labeled as “light,” “mild,” or “low.” Further, with this new regulatory mandate, FDA will regulate tobacco advertising and require manufacturers to use more effective warning labels, as well as restrict the access of young people to their products. FDA will also assess and regulate modified risk products, taking into account the impact their availability and marketing has on initiation and cessation of tobacco use.

Reducing the tremendous toll of disease, disability, and death caused by tobacco use in the United States is an urgent need and a shared responsibility. All public health agencies need to partner together to develop common strategies to combat the dangers of smoking and tobacco use and defeat this epidemic for good.

This 2010 Surgeon General’s report represents another important step in the developing recognition, both in this nation and around the world, that tobacco use is devastating to public health. Past investments in research and in comprehensive tobacco control programs—combined with the findings presented by this new report—provide the foundation, evidence, and impetus to increase the urgency of our actions to end the epidemic of tobacco use.

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