

# Tobacco Dependence Prevention

Smoking is the **leading preventable cause of death in the world**.<sup>[1]</sup> The most important part of the fight against smoking is smoking prevention. Society needs to come together to fight against tobacco companies and try to prevent some of the **5 million deaths per year** that are due to smoking.

Tobacco dependence is a chronic disorder. It is an addiction to tobacco-containing products such as cigarettes, caused by the drug nicotine. Sufferers can't stop using these products, even though they are causing their bodies harm. It is the nicotine in tobacco that causes this dependence, but the toxic effects and subsequent diseases come mainly from other substances in tobacco.

Smoking is an acquired behaviour; it takes many months or years to establish it. This means that it also takes a long time for a smoker to become a non-smoker because it is not just a physical dependence but also a psychosocial dependence.

It is important to establish the nicotine dependence level in someone trying to stop smoking so that more accurate treatment and nicotine replacement therapy can be provided and to anticipate the severity of withdrawal symptoms.

## Methods of Prevention

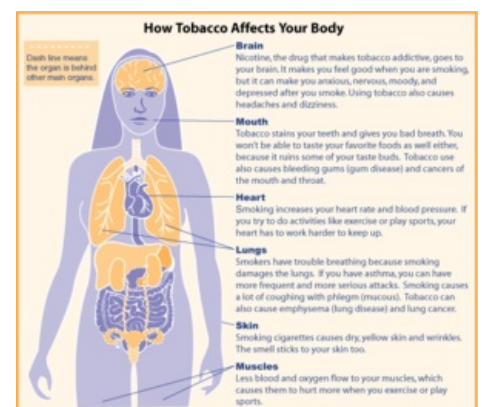
Society needs to be more supportive and understanding towards those trying to stop smoking.

- **Increasing the price of cigarettes** – due to an increase in taxation of cigarettes
- **Protection for non-smokers from passive smoke** – Providing smoke-free places, introducing smoking bans in restaurants/public buildings as has been done in some countries already eg. the United Kingdom and France. There should be special rooms built in public buildings like airports for smokers to go that are sealed off from the general public.
- **Advertising restrictions** – Television advertisements should not be allowed to be broadcast before “the watershed” which is usually about 9pm, to try to limit children’s exposure to such adverts. Also posters should not be placed near schools/playgrounds etc. Some people are even calling for a complete ban on advertising.
- The media should have more stringent checks on what is released to the public that encourages or romanticizes smoking, eg some films or television shows.
- There should be more **anti-smoking campaigns** – These have been proven to help people to stop smoking. In the United Kingdom in 2004, advertising campaigns prompted 32% of the attempts to stop smoking, whereas GPs were responsible for only 21%.<sup>[2]</sup> Even though such campaigns can be expensive, smoking costs society so much that it is worth it, it **costs the NHS £5billion per year**, and the American society \$96billion per year.<sup>[3]</sup>
- Cigarettes should be sold only in licensed stores – Preventing such easy accessibility of cigarettes may prevent people from starting in the first place if they know it will not be easy to get cigarettes regularly.
- There should be warnings on cigarette packets, with images showing the potential consequences. In the last few years very graphic medical images have been printed on cigarette packets in a bid to cut down on the number of smokers.
- Doctors and other healthcare professionals should be a role model for their patients, so should be non-smokers. Although currently in western countries, 3-10% of doctors are smokers and 20% of nurses are smokers.
- There should also be help for smokers to quit that is easily available and well-advertised. The NHS has a great ‘Smokefree’ campaign and provides a ‘Quit Kit’ for free for those trying to stop smoking. They also have a helpline to call for help/advice.

## Cigarette component



Anti-smoking Campaign



Anti-smoking Campaign

## Prevention in Children

The **optimal age for prevention is in adolescents**, before the age of 12. This is before they are exposed to pressures and opportunities to start smoking. It is much easier to stop people from starting to smoke than it is to help them to stop smoking once they are addicted to the nicotine.

Most smokers started smoking in their childhood, on average between 12 and 14 years old. Adults begin to smoke later in life much less frequently. Tobacco companies aim a lot of their advertising campaigns at children and try to glamorise smoking.

## How to Stop a Child from Starting to Smoke

- Create a loving home environment where the child feels safe and comfortable
- Enhance their self-esteem
- As a parent, **don't smoke at home** and encourage children that it is an acceptable/sociable activity. Smoking at home also causes problems due to passive smoking, including more cases of otitis media and leukaemia.
- The principles of the tobacco company should be explained to children, so that it is clear that they are being targeted.
- Encourage them to be productive with their free time and to spend it being active with friends.
- Explain to them that a cigarette is not a sign of maturity or adulthood.
- Don't glamorise smoking or encourage things that do, eg. some television shows/ films

## Links

### Related Articles

- Tobacco Dependence
- Tobacco Dependence Treatment

### External Links

- Smokefree (<http://smokefree.nhs.uk/>)

### Bibliography

- BENCKO, Vladimir, et al. *Hygiene and epidemiology : selected chapters*. 2. edition. Prague. 2008. ISBN 80-246-0793-X.

### References

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