

TOBACCO USE AND CESSATION: MEXICO

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Overview

The health effects of tobacco use are a costly problem in Mexico. Almost one-quarter of the population smokes; this results in approximately 100,000 patients demanding health care services to treat tobacco-related illnesses each year.¹ In total, Mexico spends U.S.\$5.7 billion a year on direct medical costs attributable to tobacco consumption.² Due to the human and economic toll of tobacco use, the Mexican government is working to reduce the prevalence of smoking by restricting smoking and providing Mexicans with tools to help them quit.

Prevalence of Tobacco Use

Smoking prevalence in Mexico is similar to rates in the United States: 19.8% of the population over the age of 15 smokes.³ Approximately 21.6% of adult men and 17.7% of adult women use tobacco.³ Tobacco use is also common among youth. The 2006 Global Youth Tobacco Survey found that three in 10 students between the ages 13 and 15 in Mexico City used tobacco (any form); over a quarter of students smoked cigarettes.² Fortunately, smoking prevalence is declining. Between 2001 and 2011, overall adult smoking rates dropped by over 30%.²

Mexicans primarily use cigarettes.⁴ Smoking is more prevalent in urban areas than rural ones.⁵ According to a 2006 International Tobacco Control survey findings, 53% of Mexican smokers have less than a high school degree.⁶ The poorest 20% of households in Mexico spend nearly 11% of their household income on tobacco.⁴

Tobacco-Related Health Information

Tobacco use significantly affects the health of Mexicans. Approximately 47,000 people die every year from tobacco-related diseases, accounting for 10% of all Mexican deaths annually.⁷ Lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and cardiovascular disease are major causes of smoking attributable death in Mexico; approximately 85% of lung cancer, 80% of COPD cases, and 25% of all cardiovascular disease cases in Mexico are attributable to smoking.¹

A recent Mexico City study found that the risk of developing lung cancer would decrease by 79% if the population never smoked.⁸ In addition, if Mexican smokers quit before turning 35, they would reduce their lung cancer risk by 64%. Individuals who quit smoking for 15 or more years reduce their lung cancer risk by 59%.⁸

Tobacco Use in the Workplace

The Mexican government has recently taken strides to reduce national tobacco use. The country passed national smoke-free legislation in 2008 that:

- Restricts smoking in public spaces.⁴
- Requires larger health warnings on cigarette packs.⁴
- Bans tobacco promotion, advertisement and sponsorship on television and radio.⁴
- Permits designated smoking rooms in the workplace.⁴

The Mexico City government has been more proactive in promoting tobacco cessation. The city government-approved broad smoke-free legislation requires all indoor workplaces and public places, including restaurants and bars, to be 100% smoke-free.^{9,10} Over 90% of Mexico City residents approve of the ban.⁹

Tobacco Cessation Treatment Options

The Mexican Ministry of Health sponsors a national quitline to aid smoking cessation efforts. In addition to providing phone-based counseling, the quitline offers referrals to resources like an informational website (www.conadic.gob.mx), online chat rooms and community-based tobacco cessation services.¹¹ Mexicans may also access in-person counseling in health clinics, hospitals and health professional offices.⁴ Nicotine replacement therapy is widely available and bupropion can be purchased with a prescription.⁴

Cost of Tobacco Use

In 2008, 10% of the Mexican Social Security Institute's (IMSS) annual expenditures were on tobacco associated medical costs.² The cost of treatment for tobacco related illnesses total \$5,700 million each year.¹²

Resources

- [WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic, 2008](#)
- [WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic, 2009](#)
- [WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic, 2013](#)
- [Directory of Stop Smoking Clinics and Services](#)

Citations

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