

TOBACCO USE AND CESSATION: UNITED KINGDOM

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Overview

Tobacco use is the largest cause of preventable illness and death in the United Kingdom (UK).¹ Hence, tobacco cessation is a national priority. The National Health Service (NHS), the government-run healthcare system, offers comprehensive tobacco cessation programs.²

Prevalence of Tobacco Use

In 2011, an estimated 10 million Britons smoked.³ Smoking rates among men and women are similar (22% of males and 21% of females) and decreasing. Between 2005 and 2011, rates dropped by 1.3%.³ Adults smoke an average of 12.7 cigarettes per day.⁴ Approximately 23% of students aged 11 and 15 tried smoking at least once; 84% thought that smoking made them look cool.⁴ A 2002 study by the Health and Social Care Information Centre indicated the number of children aged 11 to 15 declined from 42% to 23%.⁵ A 2007 ban on advertising of tobacco and smoke-free laws are considered responsible for the decline.⁵

The prevalence of electronic cigarette use in the U.K. is rising, from 3% in 2010 to 11% in 2013. Of those that use e-cigarettes or electronic delivery system (ENDS):

- 31% use it to reduce the number of cigarettes they smoke but not to quit smoking;
- 30% use it to quit smoking entirely; and
- 29% to keep off tobacco.⁴

Cost of Tobacco Use

In 2010, smoking cost the National Health Service (NHS) £2.7 billion (U.S.\$4.4 billion).⁶ Additionally, the practice was associated with 34 million days of lost productivity nationally given absenteeism and smoking breaks.⁶ In 2007, smoking cost employers about U.S.\$10 billion in lost productivity, absenteeism and fire damage.⁷

In 2012/2013, £12.3 billion was earned from tobacco taxes. By contract, the government spent £88.2 million that year on services to help people quit and another £60.1 million on medication to help people quit.⁸

Tobacco-Related Health Information

Tobacco use is the most significant cause of preventable illness and death in the U.K.¹ Over 100,000 individuals die annually from tobacco-related illnesses.⁸ Individuals who smoke lose an average of 20 years of life.⁹ In addition, secondhand smoke kills more than 12,000 individuals every year in the U.K.⁹ Among adults aged 35 and older, 1.6 million NHS hospital admissions were for diseases believed to be caused by smoking.⁴ In England, there are about 79, 100 deaths caused by smoking, 18% of the total mortality rate in 2011.⁴

For every smoking-related death in the U.K., approximately 20 others suffer from smoking-related diseases.¹⁰ Approximately 364,000 patients each year are admitted to hospitals as a result of a smoking-related illnesses, the equivalent of 7,000 admissions each week or 1,000 each day.¹⁰

Smoking is related to at least 80% of all deaths from lung cancer in the U.K., 80% of which are from bronchitis and emphysema and 17% from heart disease.¹ All told, 30% of all cancer deaths and about 90% of cases of peripheral vascular disease can be attributed to smoking.¹

Smoking rates while pregnant in the U.K. are high. About 12% of women report smoking throughout their pregnancy.⁹ The consequences of doing so included preterm delivery/prematurity, low-birth weight, fetal deaths, stillbirths and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).¹¹ Smoking while pregnant doubles the risk that children will become smokers.¹² Quitting smoking is essential for pregnant women because smoking during pregnancy is the most preventable cause of illness and death among mothers and infants.¹³

2010 Smoking Habits of Pregnant Women in UK⁴

General Population	Women in Manual Occupations	Women in Non-Manual Occupations
26%	40%	19%
12%	29%	7%

Tobacco Use in the Workplace

The U.K. bans smoking in all enclosed public places, including workplaces.¹⁴ In England and Wales, there are approximately 34 million days of absence attributed annually to smoking-related illness.³

to Smokers take an average of two to three more sick days a year than those who do not smoke, costing the UK economy about £1.4 billion.¹⁵ According to a 2012 study, smokers are 33% more likely to miss work than their colleagues.

In the U.K., smoking is more prevalent among persons in manual labor occupations (i.e., blue collar) than professional or managerial ones (i.e., white collar). In 2012, 33% of blue collar workers smoked; 14% of white collar workers smoked.⁸

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) outlines the following recommendations for employers to promote tobacco cessation:

- Develop corporate policies providing employee.⁷
- Provide employees information about local government-run tobacco cessation services.⁷
- Allow employees to use tobacco cessation resources during work hours without loss of pay.⁷

Smoking cessation is on the U.K. political agenda. Recent government action steps include making warning label adjustments, instituting advertising bans, and providing tobacco cessation services.⁹ In 2007, the United Kingdom enacted smoke-free legislation banning smoking in all enclosed public places and workplaces, including pubs, clubs, membership clubs, cafes and restaurants.⁶ In March 2011, the government announced a new tobacco control plan further restricting tobacco marketing to reduce smoking prevalence.¹⁶

- Health warning labels must now cover 30% of the front and 40% of the back of tobacco packaging.⁹

- Terms such as "low-tar" and "light" are prohibited from tobacco products.⁹ Maximum yields for tar, carbon monoxide and nicotine in cigarettes have been set.⁹

Employers can use the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) to determine the potential costs and savings of encouraging and supporting employee cessation.⁸

Tobacco Cessation Treatment Options

Almost three-fourths (72%) of current British smokers want to quit.⁹ The National Health Service (NHS) offers a tobacco cessation program called Stop Smoking Services.² Offered treatment options include counseling and pharmacological treatment (i.e., bupropion, varenicline and nicotine replacement therapy [NRT]).² Trained nurses and pharmacists oversee counseling and support services. Group or one-on-one sessions may be available. Pharmacological treatment options (i.e., bupropion and varenicline) are available by prescription.

Between 2009 and 2010, the U.K. government spent £83.9 million (U.S.\$136 million) on tobacco cessation services, and £61.8 million (U.S.\$100 million) on medications to help smokers quit.⁶ About 15% of people abstain from tobacco for one year after attempting to quit.² Smokers who use NHS's services and pharmacological treatment when quitting are four times more likely to succeed than those who use willpower alone.² The Net Ingredient Costs (NIC) of the drugs used to help people quit is over £58.1 million.⁴

Resources

- [Smokefree England](#)

Business and Employers Checklist

- [The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence \(NICE\)](#)

[--Cost Calculator](#)

Employers can use NICE's cost calculator to determine the potential costs and savings from encouraging and supporting employees to quit smoking using effective and evidence-based interventions. A slide set with implementation advice is also available.

[--Workplace Interventions to Promote Smoking Cessation](#)

Recommends actions that employers can take in the workplace to leverage NHS cessation resources and reduce employee tobacco use.

Citations

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