

Tobacco policies: Smoking bans reduce exposure to secondhand smoke and reduce heart attacks

April 14 2010

In countries and states that have introduced policies that restrict smoking in public, people have less exposure to secondhand smoke. There is also a reduction in the number of people who have heart attacks, as well as an improvement in other indicators of health. These findings are reported in a new review published in the April issue of The Cochrane Library.

"Taken together, the benefits for workers and the reduction of hospital-related [morbidity](#) are impressive," says Professor Cecily Kelleher, School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Population Science at University College Dublin, Ireland.

Around the world, many countries are introducing policies that restrict where people can smoke. This follows findings that [tobacco smoke](#) is the second major cause of death in the world and, according to the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), is currently responsible for the death of around one in ten adults.

Smoking, however, is a complex personal and social activity, so there is an ongoing need to monitor the effect of legislation to see if it is benefiting people.

A team of researchers searched for studies of situations where a legislative ban had been introduced, or restrictions on smoking had been applied to populations. They considered data from 50 studies that

monitored at least the first six months after a policy change had been implemented.

While there is often a fear that people will react badly to any restrictive policy, the researchers found that approval of the bans, and compliance with them, increased once the bans had been implemented.

"The balance of evidence suggests that legislative smoking bans have achieved their primary objective of reducing exposure to [secondhand smoke](#). The impact on active smoking is not yet conclusively demonstrated," says Professor Kelleher.

Provided by Wiley

Citation: Tobacco policies: Smoking bans reduce exposure to secondhand smoke and reduce heart attacks (2010, April 14) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-04-tobacco-policies-exposure-secondhand-heart.html>

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