

Efforts to curtail tobacco use stalled in 2014, report says

January 21 2015



Smoking still claims 500,000 lives a year in the United States.

(HealthDay)—Little to no progress is being made in curtailing tobacco use in the United States, a new report from the American Lung Association contends.

The Surgeon General's 1964 report raised the red flag about the dangers of smoking. Tobacco, however, still claims nearly 500,000 lives each year and costs up to \$333 billion in [health care expenses](#) and lost productivity in the United States, says the lung association's annual report for 2014.

"Despite cutting U.S. smoking rates by half in the last 51 years, tobacco's ongoing burden on America's health and economy is catastrophic," said Harold Wimmer, president and CEO of the American Lung Association.

"Tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of death and it

impacts almost every system in the body, contributing to lung cancer, heart attacks, stroke, chronic [obstructive pulmonary disease](#) (COPD) and even sudden infant death syndrome," he said in an association news release.

Researchers who evaluated [tobacco control policies](#) in the United States said most states earned poor grades.

Only two states—Alaska and North Dakota—are funding their state tobacco prevention programs at the revised levels recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, according to the *State of Tobacco Control* report released Jan. 21.

On the flip side, 41 states and the District of Columbia spent less than half of what was recommended, the researchers found.

Although several states, including Connecticut, Maine and Ohio, inched closer to a comprehensive tobacco cessation benefit for Medicaid enrollees, only two states—Indiana and Massachusetts—currently provide this benefit.

"State level progress on proven tobacco control policies was virtually nonexistent in 2014," said Wimmer.

"No state passed a comprehensive smoke-free law or significantly increased tobacco taxes, and not a single state managed to earn an 'A' grade for providing access to cessation treatments," he said.

"No state policy maker should be proud of this report card," he added.

Other points of note in the report:

Neither state nor federal lawmakers took steps to increase tobacco taxes,

which have been shown to curtail smoking among young people.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration still hasn't finalized its plan to oversee all [tobacco products](#), including e-cigarettes and cigars. The lung association strongly opposes the Obama administration's proposal to exclude certain cigars from FDA oversight.

"Exempting any kind of dangerous and addictive tobacco product proven to cause lung disease, including [lung cancer](#), is unacceptable," Wimmer said in the news release. "FDA must have basic authority over all tobacco products in order to protect public health and the health of our children."

On a positive note, the federal government informed insurance companies that all seven FDA-approved medications and three forms of counseling available to help smokers quit should be covered.

Last year, the [lung](#) association urged government officials to take immediate action to reach three goals: reduce smoking rates from 18 percent to less than 10 percent by 2024; protect all Americans from secondhand smoke by 2019; and, ultimately, end the death and disease associated with tobacco use.

"The American Lung Association is urging states and the federal government to take needed steps to achieve these bold goals," said Wimmer. "It's no secret how to reduce [tobacco](#) use in the United States. Our state and federal leaders need to muster the political will to implement these proven policies."

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [smoking and tobacco use](#).

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Citation: Efforts to curtail tobacco use stalled in 2014, report says (2015, January 21) retrieved 10 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-01-efforts-curtail-tobacco-stalled.html>

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