

If one in ten US smokers quits, \$63 billion saved

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(HealthDay)—Kicking the smoking habit boosts more than just your

health—it also saves money.

That's because health care costs plummet just one year after stopping, new research shows.

A 10 percent decline in smoking would reduce U.S. health care costs by \$63 billion the following year, a study from University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) estimated.

"Our study shows that significant changes in [health care expenditures](#) begin to appear quickly after changes in [smoking behavior](#)," study first author James Lightwood, an associate professor in the UCSF School of Pharmacy, said in a university news release.

The researchers reviewed health care costs linked with smoking in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. They looked at the time period between 1992 and 2009.

In addition to the direct effects that cigarettes have on smokers, the study also included the indirect effects of [passive smoking](#) on nonsmokers.

Smoking causes a wide range of serious health issues. These include heart and lung disease, as well as pregnancy complications, the researchers explained.

The researchers found clear evidence that reducing the number of people who smoke, and getting smokers to have fewer cigarettes, was quickly followed by a rapid decline in [health care costs](#).

A major reason is that the risks for smoke-related diseases also change quickly once smokers quit, the study reported. For example, once smokers quit, their risk of heart attack and stroke drop by roughly 50

percent within one year. The risk of having a [low birth weight](#) baby virtually disappeared when a pregnant woman stopped smoking during her first trimester, the researchers said.

"These findings show that state and national policies that reduce smoking not only will improve health, but can be a key part of health care cost containment even in the short run," said study co-author, Stanton Glantz, director of the UCSF Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education.

The study authors estimated that California spent \$15 billion less on medical costs in 2009 because smoking in that state is well below the national average. On the flip side, Kentucky's higher-than-average smoking rate cost the state nearly \$2 billion more in health care expenditures, the study authors said.

"Regions that have implemented public policies to reduce [smoking](#) have substantially lower medical costs," the study authors wrote. "Likewise, those that have failed to implement tobacco control policies have higher [medical costs](#)."

The study was published May 10 in *PLOS Medicine*.

More information: The American Cancer Society provides more information on the [benefits of quitting smoking](#).

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