

# Thailand first in Asia to roll out plain cigarette packaging

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Thailand rolled out plain cigarette packaging on Tuesday, the first country in Asia to introduce what activists say is an effective way to reduce the appeal of smoking.

In 2012 Australia became the first country to require [tobacco products](#) to be sold without colourful brand logos.

Since then a host of mostly European countries have followed suit, including France, Hungary and the UK.

Thailand agreed last year to comply with the World Health Organisation guidelines, and packs officially showed up in stores Tuesday. Businesses have until December 8 to phase out stocks before facing fines of up to 40,000 baht (\$1,300).

The standardised packaging includes a graphic picture of tobacco's effects on the body and the logo-free brand name written in plain font.

Keeping a uniform typeface below graphic depictions of smoking-related illnesses will make the products less attractive to buyers, said Prakit Vathesatogkit, vice-chair of the NGO Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance.

"For non-smokers, for kids, they are less likely to start," Prakit, who was involved in advocacy efforts, told AFP.

There are more than 246 million [cigarette smokers](#) in Southeast Asia, where campaigners say low prices help make it one of the largest tobacco-consuming regions in the world.

In Thailand, the health impact is huge and smoking-related illnesses are a leading cause of death.

Singapore is set to implement similar restrictions on packaging next year.

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