

Tobacco use costs world 6 million lives, \$1 trillion annually: report

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(HealthDay)—Smoking kills about 6 million people a year, and costs the world more than \$1 trillion a year in health care expenses and lost productivity, a new report says.

But, billions of dollars and millions of lives could be saved through higher tobacco prices and taxes, according to the [report](#) from the World Health Organization and the U.S. National Cancer Institute.

Besides reducing the risk of cancer and heart disease, such tobacco-control policies could raise large amounts of money for governments to use for health and economic development, the study authors said.

"The economic impact of tobacco on countries, and the general public, is huge, as this new report shows," said Dr. Oleg Chestnov. He is WHO's assistant director-general for [noncommunicable diseases](#) and mental health.

"The [tobacco industry](#) produces and markets products that kill millions of people prematurely, rob households of finances that could have been

used for food and education, and impose immense health care costs on families, communities and countries," Chestnov said in a WHO news release.

Annual tax revenues from cigarettes globally could increase by 47 percent, or \$140 billion, if all countries raised excise taxes by about 80 cents per pack, according to the report.

The report authors predicted this would raise cigarette retail prices an average of 42 percent, leading to a 9 percent decline in smoking rates and up to 66 million fewer adult smokers.

Poorer countries suffer the greatest burden from tobacco use. There are 1.1 billion smokers age 15 or older worldwide, and 8 out of 10 of them are in low- and middle-income countries, the report noted.

The research summarized in this report "confirms that evidence-based tobacco control interventions make sense from an economic as well as a public health standpoint," said report co-editor Frank Chaloupka, professor of economics at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

The 700-page report dispelled tobacco industry claims that tobacco-control measures cause economic harm, said Dr. Douglas Bettcher of WHO.

"This report shows how lives can be saved and economies can prosper when governments implement cost-effective, proven measures, like significantly increasing taxes and prices on [tobacco products](#), and banning [tobacco marketing](#) and smoking in public," said Bettcher, WHO's director for the prevention of noncommunicable diseases.

Tobacco is a major cause of noncommunicable diseases including heart disease, cancer, diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Such preventable diseases account for about 16 million premature deaths (before age 70) worldwide every year, Bettcher and his colleagues said.

Reducing tobacco is a major part of efforts to lower premature deaths from noncommunicable diseases by one-third by 2030.

"Progress is being made in controlling the [global tobacco epidemic](#), but concerted efforts are needed to ensure progress is maintained or accelerated," the report said. "Increasing tobacco use in some regions, and the potential for increase in others, threatens to undermine global progress in [tobacco control](#)."

More information: The U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse has more about [cigarettes and other tobacco products](#).

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