

Effects of Tobacco Use on Health

March 11, 2025

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Tobacco smoking is the leading cause of cancer, lung, and heart diseases in Texas.
2. The U.S. spent over \$600 billion in 2018 on smoking-related costs, including health care and job loss productivity.
3. Tobacco prevention and cessation programs, such as Truth Initiative,[®] can help support healthier Texans of all ages.

Impact of Tobacco Smoking

Cigarette smoking is the most common type of tobacco use, but other popular products include cigars, cigarillos, waterpipe tobacco (hookah), and smokeless tobacco.¹

- Nicotine is highly addictive, especially when smoking begins at a young age. Around 90% of smokers began smoking before the age of 18.²
- People who smoke are at a higher risk for heart attack, stroke, lung disease, and cancer.³
- Tobacco use is the leading cause of several cancers, including lung, bladder, stomach, and esophageal, among others.³
 - In Texas, lung, bronchial, and tracheal cancer were the leading cancer cases (82%) from tobacco smoking between 2013 and 2017.⁴
 - Lung, bronchial, and tracheal cancers are the second most commonly diagnosed cancers, following prostate cancer in males and breast cancer in women.⁴
- Cigarette smokers are almost four times as likely to develop heart disease, and twice as likely to experience a stroke than non-smokers.⁵
- Approximately 3 in 10 cancer deaths are a result of tobacco use.⁶

Smokers are
25x
more likely
to develop
lung cancer than
non-smokers⁴

Reasons people may smoke:⁷



addicted
young



feeling buzzed
or energized



perceived ability
to focus on tasks



social activity and
peer pressure

Impact of Second-Hand Smoke

Secondhand smoke is defined as smoke coming from burning a cigarette or cigar, or smoke exhaled by people who smoke.⁸

- Secondhand smoke exposure increases an individual's risk for developing lung, stomach, bladder, esophageal, kidney, pancreatic, and other types of cancers.⁹⁻¹¹
 - Adults who do not smoke but are exposed to second-hand smoke are 20-30% more likely to get lung cancer than those who are not exposed to second-hand smoke.¹²
- In the U.S., approximately 7,000 people die each year of lung cancer from secondhand smoke.⁹
- In Texas, approximately 21% of middle and high school students reported being around someone who smokes in the home, according to the Texas Youth Tobacco Survey.¹¹



There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke and even brief exposure can be harmful.¹³

Populations Disproportionately Affected by Smoking:

Many minority populations, including veterans, are at higher risk of smoking in the United States.^{7,14}



18% of people living in rural communities smoke compared to **11%** in urban areas.⁷



Around **22% of veterans** smoke, most of whom are males between 18 and 25 years old.⁷



People without health insurance are more likely to smoke (**around 19%**) compared to their insured counterparts (**about 10%**).⁷



Around **20%** of people living below the poverty threshold are smokers. Additionally, **21%** of people who did not graduate high school are smokers.⁷



Almost **20% of individuals with disabilities** smoke, compared to able-bodied people (**11%**).⁷



1 in 5 adults who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community smoke.⁷



Over 40% of people with behavioral health conditions such as anxiety and depression reported smoking cigarettes.¹⁴

In 2018, the U.S. spent more than \$600 billion on smoking-related costs:¹⁵



Over **\$240 billion** in health care spending.



Approximately **\$372 billion** in lost job productivity due to smoking-related health conditions.

Effects of Tobacco Use on Birth Outcomes

Mothers who smoke while pregnant have higher risk of pregnancy and post-birth complications.^{16,17}

- When a mother smokes, the nicotine crosses the placenta barrier and can harm the developing baby.¹⁸
- Babies whose mothers smoked during pregnancy and are exposed to smoking after birth, have a higher risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).^{16,17}
- Smoking during pregnancy increases the baby's risk for birth defects including cleft lip, cleft palate, or both.^{16,17}
- Babies exposed to smoking in the womb may be born small, whether born premature or at full-term.^{16,17}
 - Premature births often have other health problems, but smoke exposure can damage the baby's lungs and brains, resulting in damage that can last into teenage years.¹⁶

Premature babies exposed to smoking in the womb have a greater risk of:¹⁶



Low birth weight



Developmental delays



Breathing problems



Feeding difficulties



Hearing and sight problems

Recommendations

Tobacco prevention and cessation programs can help support healthier Texans and decrease rates of cancer across the state.

Prevention and Cessation Programs:

- Raise awareness and promote data-driven smoking cessation and prevention programs in schools, such as Truth Initiative.¹⁹
- Schools can also learn more about incorporating data-driven cessation programs from the Truth Initiative to support students wishing to quit smoking.¹⁹
- MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston offers a tobacco cessation program, with includes counseling and medication treatments.²⁰



State-Level Recommendations:

- Increase tobacco excise tax on all tobacco products.²¹
- End sales of flavored tobacco products to make smoking, especially smokeless vaping, less appealing.²¹
- Increase access to Medicaid coverage to support tobacco cessation programs.²¹
 - Update healthcare insurance coverage to include cessation programs and treatment.
- Implement and enforce smoke free laws in shared public spaces in rural areas such as workplaces, restaurants, gaming and sport facilities, etc.²¹



Texas Tobacco Quitline is a free and confidential resource for tobacco cessation counseling for Texans ages 13 and older.

In follow-up surveys, 30% of people reported not having smoked in the past 30 days after having utilized the quitline.²²

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Resources

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