

WARNING: You don't have to smoke to die from it. Second-hand smoke kills.

Tobacco — The Leading Epidemic of Our Time

Fact Sheet 1

Cigarettes are the #1 cause of premature death in the United States. From 1995 to 1999, smoking caused more than 440,000 premature deaths each year in our nation. Among the nearly 50 million Americans who smoke, one third—more than 15 million—will die prematurely from smoking.

Smoking is also the #1 cause of preventable death in New York City, killing twice as many people as AIDS, alcohol, murder, and suicide *combined*. Tobacco kills more than one New Yorker *every hour*.

- ◆ Contrary to popular belief, almost half of smoking-related deaths occur in people *younger* than 65.
- ◆ Smoking accounts for about 1 in 4 of all cancer deaths, including nearly 90% of lung cancers.
- ◆ More women die of lung cancer than breast cancer. For every two women who die of breast cancer, three die of lung cancer.
- ◆ Smoking causes many other deadly cancers and debilitating illnesses besides lung cancer and heart disease, including: blindness, impotence, Alzheimer's disease, emphysema, asthma, leukemia, and cancers of the throat, bladder, liver, larynx, kidney, pancreas, cervix, and many more.
- ◆ 40 New York City schoolchildren start smoking every day. About 13 of them will eventually die from the effects of their addiction.

Over the past 20 years, nearly a quarter of a million New Yorkers have died from tobacco-related causes. These tobacco-related deaths could have been prevented. Today, more than 1 million New Yorkers smoke, and unless urgent action is taken, nearly 100,000 New Yorkers will die from tobacco-related diseases over the next 10 years.

Smoking imposes vast economic costs as well. Measured in health-care costs, decreased job productivity, and lost earnings, the tobacco epidemic costs Americans more than \$157 billion a year—about \$550 for every man, woman, and child in the country.

However, the tobacco epidemic *can* be controlled—with a combination of taxation, legislation, education, cessation services, and monitoring.



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