

## **Smoking: 50 Years After the 1964 Surgeon General's Report**

The Office of the Surgeon General recently released the 32<sup>nd</sup> tobacco-related Surgeon General's report issued since 1964. The report highlights 50 years of progress in tobacco control and prevention, presents new data on the health consequences of smoking, and discusses opportunities that can potentially end the smoking epidemic in the United States. According to the Surgeon General, scientific evidence supports the following facts:

- Since the first Surgeon General's report on smoking and health was published 50 years ago, more than 20 million Americans have died because of smoking
- If current rates continue, 5.6 million Americans younger than 18 years of age who are alive today are projected to die prematurely from smoking-related disease
- Most of the 20 million smoking-related deaths since 1964 have been adults with a history of smoking; however, 2.5 million of those have been among nonsmokers who died from diseases caused by exposure to secondhand smoke
- More than 100,000 babies have died in the last 50 years from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, complications from prematurity, complications from low birth weight, and other pregnancy problems resulting from parental smoking
- Smoking rates among adults and teens are less than half what they were in 1964; however, 42 million American adults and about 3 million middle and high school students continue to smoke
- Nearly half a million Americans die prematurely from smoking each year
- More than 16 million Americans suffer from a disease caused by smoking
- On average, compared to people who have never smoked, smokers suffer more health problems and disability due to their smoking and ultimately lose more than a decade of life

- For the first time, women are as likely to die as men from many diseases caused by smoking
- Women's disease risks from smoking have risen sharply over the last 50 years and are now equal to men's for lung cancer, COPD, and cardiovascular diseases. The number of women dying from COPD now exceeds the number of men
- Evidence also suggests that women are more susceptible to develop severe COPD at younger ages
- Between 1959 and 2010, lung cancer risks for smokers rose dramatically. Among female smokers, risk increased 10-fold. Among male smokers, risk doubled

The report concludes that the goal of ending tobacco-related death and disease requires additional action such as easy-to-access cessation treatment and promotion of cessation treatment in clinical settings, smoke-free policies, and comprehensive statewide tobacco control programs.

For more information on the latest Surgeon General's report on smoking, please see

<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/50-years-of-progress/fact-sheet.html>

For further information regarding smoking or other substance use/abuse in women during pregnancy, please contact Karen Kuehn Howell, Ph.D., at the Center for Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development, Emory University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, 12 Executive Park Drive NE, Atlanta, Georgia, 30329. You can also phone us at 404-712-9829 or visit our website at <http://www.emory.edu/MSACD>

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