

Alliance for a Healthy New England

HEALTH NOW! MASSACHUSETTS

THE TOLL OF TOBACCO IN MASSACHUSETTS

Tobacco Use in Massachusetts

- High school students who smoke: 34%
- High school males who use smokeless tobacco: 10%
- Number of children (under 18) who become new daily smokers each year: 24,000
- Kids exposed to secondhand smoke at home: 297,000
- Number of packs of cigarettes illegally sold to children in Massachusetts each year: 5.8 million
- Adults in Massachusetts who smoke: 20%

While adult smoking has generally been decreasing throughout the country in recent years, these declines have slowed or stopped. In contrast, smoking among children increased steadily throughout much of the 1990s. Although national underage smoking rates finally dropped slightly from 1997 to 1998, they remain at historically high levels. Over the past ten years, the number of children in the U.S. who become new daily smokers each year has risen by more than 70 percent.

Deaths in Massachusetts From Smoking

- Number of people who die each year in Massachusetts from smoking: 10,200
- Number of Massachusetts children now under 18 who will die from smoking (if current trends continue): 105,000

Smoking kills more people than alcohol, AIDS, car crashes, illegal drugs, murders, and suicides combined -- and thousands more die each year from other tobacco-related causes -- such as fires caused by smoking (more than 1,000 deaths/year nationwide), exposure to second hand smoke (more than 53,000 nationwide¹), and smokeless tobacco use. No good estimates are currently available, however, for the number of Massachusetts citizens who die from these other tobacco-related causes, or for the much larger numbers who suffer from tobacco-related health problems each year without actually dying.

Tobacco-Related Monetary Costs

- Annual health care expenditures in Massachusetts directly related to tobacco use: \$2.4 billion
- Residents' state and federal tax burden caused by tobacco-related health costs: \$910 million
- Massachusetts government Medicaid payments directly related to tobacco use: \$400 million
- Additional annual expenditures in Massachusetts for babies' health problems caused by mothers smoking to being exposed to second hand smoke during pregnancy: \$26 to \$76 million

Additional health care expenditures caused by tobacco include the costs related to direct exposure to second hand smoke, smoking-caused fires, and smokeless tobacco use. Although these additional health expenditures certainly total in the tens of millions of dollars in Massachusetts, and increase the Massachusetts governments' Medicaid burden, there are no good state estimates currently available. Other non-health costs caused by tobacco use include direct residential and commercial property losses from fires caused by cigarettes or cigars (more than \$500 million nationwide); work productivity losses from work absences, on-the-job performance declines, and early termination of employment caused by tobacco-related health problems (\$40+ billion per year nationwide); and the costs of the extra cleaning and maintenance made necessary by tobacco smoke, smokeless tobacco spit, and tobacco-related litter (about \$4+ billion per year nationwide for commercial establishments alone). No good state-specific estimates of these non-health costs from tobacco available, but Massachusetts' pro-rata share, based on its population, is at least \$910 million per year.

Tobacco Industry Influence

- Annual tobacco industry advertising & marketing expenditures nationwide: \$5.2 billion
- Estimated portion spent for Massachusetts advertising each year: \$119 million

Published research studies have found that children are three times more sensitive to tobacco advertising than adults and are more likely to be influenced to smoke by cigarette marketing than by peer pressure, and that one-third of underage experimentation with smoking is attributable to tobacco company advertising.

1. Journal of American Medical Association, January 1998.

Excerpted from the National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids