
TOBACCO : Ontario Tobacco Strategy

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a healthcare professional about any health concerns you have, and before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of premature death, disease and disability in Ontario. Every half hour, someone dies from tobacco related illness. Cancer Care Ontario estimates that more than 16,000 deaths each year — one in six of all deaths in the province — are attributable to tobacco use. In addition to this fact, the burden of tobacco use on Ontarians and our healthcare system is more than \$1 billion every year.

The government's Ontario Tobacco Strategy (OTS) is committed to the prevention of tobacco use — especially by young people — protection of Ontarians from second-hand smoke and cessation support for those who wish to quit.

They have already begun to take steps to further the goals of their strategy. In November 2003, they increased the price of tobacco by \$2.50 a carton, making it more financially difficult for youth to purchase cigarettes. The government is also focusing on all Ontarians and has committed to making Ontario smoke-free by 2006.

The OTS's comprehensive approach to curbing tobacco use has been so successful that it has served as a model for other provinces, including Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. In fact, the Smoker's Helpline, which was originally developed in Ontario, has been implemented in other provinces to help people quit.

In 1999, an Ontario expert panel of tobacco control decision makers consulted with experts from across Canada and the United States and directed a renewal of the OTS based upon best practices from the Centres For Disease Control.

Initiatives to help reduce the use of tobacco

The OTS aims to reduce tobacco use among all people in Ontario. A public education campaign, a telephone support line for quitters, web-based and enhanced school and community-based smoking prevention programs are being funded in partnership with highly credible health organizations such as the Canadian Cancer Society, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Ontario Lung Association, Cancer Care Ontario, the Ontario Medical Association and local community-based organizations such as the University of Toronto. These partnerships are key to the success of the OTS. Other important partnerships include Health Canada and public health units within municipal governments.

Among these projects is a province-wide television and print media advertising campaign sponsored by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario. The campaign focuses on smoking and how exposure to smoke is a public responsibility. Overall, OTS and its partners have been successful in helping Ontarians to become more aware of

the health risks related to smoking, second-hand smoke, and the benefits of not starting to smoke.

The Tobacco Control Act

The legislative arm of the Ontario Tobacco Strategy is the *Tobacco Control Act* (TCA). Ontario boards of health are doing their part to decrease youth access to cigarettes by continuing to vigorously enforce the TCA. Public health inspectors work to prevent smoking in public places and tobacco sales by vendors to minors.

If you need information about the TCA or are concerned about people under the age of 19 buying or getting a hold of tobacco products in your neighbourhood, contact your local public health unit.

Facts about second-hand smoke

- Exposure to environmental (second-hand) tobacco smoke (ETS) is linked to heart disease, lung cancer and nasal sinus cancer.
- Exposure to ETS can have serious effects on children and is linked to lower birth weights, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), bronchitis, pneumonia, fetal growth impairment and increased rates of asthma and other respiratory tract problems ¹.
- A report released by the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) in February 2003, estimates that 2,600 Ontarians die from being exposed to second-hand smoke. The report calls for provincial action to eliminate exposure to second-hand smoke.
- Over 85 per cent of Ontarians are covered by some form of smoke-free bylaw governing exposure to second-hand smoke.

¹ Report of the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit. *Protection from second-hand tobacco smoke in Ontario. A Review of evidence regarding best practices.* Toronto, 2001.

The benefits to quitting smoking

- After only 24 hours of quitting smoking, the risk of a heart attack begins to decrease.
- After one year of remaining smoke-free, an individual will be half as likely to get heart disease.
- Between 5 and 15 years after quitting (depending on how long and how much an individual had been smoking) the chance of lung cancer decreases by one half.

Government of Ontario

For information about health services and resources :
www.health.gov.on.ca

For consumer-friendly health tips and information :
www.HealthyOntario.com

INFOline: 1-877-234-4343;
TTY: 1-800-387-5559

Telehealth Ontario:
1-866-797-0000; TTY 1-866-797-0007

INFOline is open during business hours and can provide general information on healthcare.

Telehealth Ontario is a 24/7 service which uses nurse practitioners to answer your immediate health concerns.