

## Smokers who die from a smoking-related disease lose, on average, 15 years of life

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### Description

Internationally, it is estimated that those who die of a smoking-related disease lose, on average, 15 years of life.

### Summary of evidence

An international study on mortality from smoking, which is cited by both the Ministry of Health<sup>1</sup> in New Zealand, and the World Health Organization,<sup>2</sup> estimates that, worldwide, long-term smokers who die from a smoking-related disease die 15 years prematurely.<sup>3</sup> In New Zealand, it is estimated that those who die of a smoking-related disease lose 13 years of life and that those New Zealanders who die of smoking-related disease in middle age lose an average of 23 years of life.<sup>4</sup> Other studies have found that overall, smokers compared with non-smokers die approximately six to ten years prematurely (depending on how much tobacco they consume).<sup>5,6</sup>

### Cited in the following publications

- Ministry of Health (2008).<sup>1</sup>  
*“Those smokers who die from a smoking-related illness lose on average 15 years of life compared with non-smokers”.*
- World Health Organization (2008).<sup>2</sup>  
*“Tobacco kills a third to half of all people who use it, on average 15 years prematurely”* (p. 14).

### Specific findings

#### *Deaths from smoking-related disease*

The following studies have shown the difference in mortality between smokers who die of smoking-related disease, and non-smokers:

- An international study of mortality from smoking estimates that smokers who die from a smoking-related disease lose 15 years of life on average, compared with non-smokers.<sup>3</sup>
- Using New Zealand data from the year 2000, the same international study on mortality from smoking estimated that New Zealand smokers who die of a smoking-related disease lose an average of 13 years of life, compared with non-smokers. Furthermore, they estimated that New Zealanders who die in middle age (defined as 35 to 69 years) from a smoking-related disease lose an average of 23 years of life.<sup>4</sup>

### *Mortality of smokers compared with non-smokers*

The following studies have examined the difference in mortality between smokers and non-smokers for all causes of death:

- In 2004, the authors of a long-term study of British doctors concluded that on average, smokers die ten years younger compared with non-smokers.<sup>6</sup>
- A large-scale prospective study conducted in Denmark which began in the 1970s found that continuing heavy smokers (those who smoked more than 15g of tobacco per day) died nine years earlier on average, compared with non-smokers. Men who were defined as light smokers (those who smoked less than 15g of tobacco per day), died 6.0 years earlier on average, compared with non-smokers, and women who were defined as light smokers died 7.4 years earlier on average compared with non-smokers.<sup>5</sup>
- In 2002, the Ministry of Health summarised the evidence from the Danish study<sup>5</sup> and the study of British doctors<sup>6</sup> to conclude that the median difference in survival for all causes of death between smokers and non-smokers is approximately 7.5 years. <sup>Error!</sup>  
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- 1 Ministry of Health (2008). *Tobacco control and smoking: Health effects of smoking*. (<http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/tobacco-effects>, retrieved September 2008).
  - 2 World Health Organization (2008). *The global tobacco crisis*. (<http://www.who.int/tobacco/mpower/en/>, retrieved September 2008).
  - 3 Peto, R. & Lopez, A. (1994). *Mortality from Smoking in Developed Countries 1950-2000: Indirect estimates from national vital statistics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
  - 4 Peto, R., Lopez, A.D., Boreham, J., & Thun, M. (2006). *Mortality from smoking in developed countries 1950-2000*. Second Edition. (<https://www.deathsfromsmoking.org.nz>, retrieved September 2008).
  - 5 Prescott, E., Osler, M., Hein, H.O., Borch-Johnsen, K., Schnohr, P., & Vestø, J. (1998). Life expectancy in Danish women and men related to smoking habits: Smoking may affect women more. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 52, 131-132.
  - 6 Doll, R., Peto, R., Boreham, J., & Sutherland, I. (2004). Mortality in relation to smoking: 50 years' observations on male British doctors. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 58, 1-9.