

Tobacco is the single leading cause of preventable death

Description

Tobacco is the single leading cause of preventable death, in New Zealand and internationally.

Summary of evidence

The Ministry of Health reports that tobacco use is the single leading modifiable cause of death in New Zealand.^{1,2,3} The U.S. Surgeon General reports that tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognise cigarette smoking as the single leading cause of preventable death in the U.S.^{4,5} The World Health Organization recognises tobacco use as the single leading cause of preventable death worldwide.⁶

Cited in the following publications:

- Ministry of Health (2008).¹
“*Smoking remains the single biggest cause of preventable morbidity and mortality in New Zealand*”.
- World Health Organization (2003).⁶
“*[Tobacco use] is the leading preventable cause of death in the world.*” (p. 91)
- U.S. Surgeon General’s Report (2004).⁴
“*Smoking remains the leading preventable cause of premature death in the United States*”. (p. 7)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2008).⁵
“*Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States*”.

Specific New Zealand findings

- In 2004, the Ministry of Health released a report using New Zealand statistics from 1997 to estimate the causes of death. When cause of death was defined by risk factor, tobacco consumption was ranked second only to the joint effects of diet, as a preventable cause of death.² This makes tobacco use the single leading behavioural cause of preventable death in New Zealand.^{2,3}

1 Ministry of Health. (2008). *Tobacco control and smoking: Tobacco control in New Zealand – deaths from smoking*. (<http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/tobacco-nz>, retrieved October 2008).

2 Ministry of Health. (2004). *Looking upstream: Causes of death cross-classified by risk and condition, New Zealand 1997*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

3 Tobias, M. & Turley, M. (2005). Causes of death classified by risk and condition, New Zealand 1997. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 29, 5-12.

4 US Department of Health and Human Services. (2004). *The health consequences of smoking. A report of the surgeon-general - Executive summary*. USDHHS, Public Health Services, Centers for Disease Control Office on Smoking and Health. (http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/sgr_2004/, retrieved October 2008).

5 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2008). *Fact sheet: Cigarette-smoking related mortality*. (http://www.cdc.gov/TOBACCO/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/cig_smoking_mort.htm, retrieved October 2008).

6 World Health Organization (2003). *World Health Report: Shaping the future*. (<http://www.who.int/whr/2003/en/>, retrieved October 2008).