

## Smokers who quit before 40 live just as long

Smokers who quit before the age of 40 live almost as long as people who have never taken up cigarettes, a new study suggests.

BAT saw a 7pc rise in sales volumes for its driving brands - Dunhill, Lucky Strike, Pall Mall and Kent Photo: PA

By Telegraph reporters

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Smoking cuts at least 10 years off a person's life, but a new study found that people who quit smoking before they turn 40 regain almost all of those potentially lost years.

Study leader Professor Prabhat Jha, of the University of Toronto, said: "Quitting smoking before age 40, and preferably well before 40, gives back almost all of the decade of lost life from continued smoking.

"That's not to say that it is safe to smoke until you are 40 and then stop. Former smokers still have a greater risk of dying sooner than people who never smoked. But the risk is small compared to the huge risk for those who continue to smoke."

The researchers found that people who quit smoking between ages 35 and 44 gained about nine years and those who quit between ages 45-54 and 55-64 gained six and four years of life, respectively.

The study is unique as it examines the risks of smoking and the benefits of stopping among a representative sample of Americans.

Women and men who smoke both lost a decade of life. Current male or female smokers ages 25 to 79 had a mortality rate three times higher than people who had never smoked. Non-smokers were about twice more likely to live to age 80 than were smokers.

This study adds to recent evidence from Britain, Japan and the United States that smoking risks involve about a decade of life lost worldwide.

Worldwide about 30 million young adults begin smoking each year and most do not stop.

On current trends, smoking will kill about one billion people in the 21st century as opposed to 100 million in the 20th century.

Professor Amartya Sen, who won the 1998 Nobel Prize in economics, said: "The inability to develop an appropriate public policy about smoking has been one of the bigger failures of public action in India, China and most other developing countries, in contrast to strong tobacco control in most western countries.

"This study brings out how great the threat actually is, and shows that risks of death from smoking are even larger than previously thought. The result is of great global significance."

Dr Jha said that high taxation is the single most effective step to get adults to quit and to prevent children from starting.

The findings are published in the New England Journal of Medicine.

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