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# Tax increases on tobacco decrease infant mortality rates



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Tobacco use is the leading cause of disease, disability and death in the US. As many as 1 in

5 deaths are related to tobacco use. Can an increase in tax help calm the storm?



A new study links tobacco tax to a drop in infant deaths.

Those rather sinister facts above make research into how tobacco use can be curbed vitally important.

Initially, tax on tobacco was introduced in an effort to incentivize people to quit - or to put them off starting smoking in the first instance.



## Spotlight on: Smoking / Quit Smoking

### How To Give Up Smoking

We discuss the many different ways to quit smoking, from smoking cessation products to help wean you off nicotine to counselling, support groups and organized programs.



### Why Is Smoking Bad For You?

We discuss smoking - the leading worldwide cause of preventable disease and death. We look at why it is bad for



New research published in Pediatrics shows that higher taxes may have even further health benefits for the American public at large.

The question of taxing tobacco and its potential positive impact on health has been debated globally for many years. New research adds further depth to this complex discussion.

## Does tobacco tax work?

The answer to that question, in short, is yes. A review of tobacco tax and smoking research published in The BMJ looked at over 100 studies from a variety of countries of varying economic status.

In the paper's conclusions, the researchers put their findings succinctly:

"Significant increases in tobacco taxes are a highly effective tobacco control strategy and lead to significant improvements in public health."

Previous research has shown that cigarette tax positively affects mean birth weights of infants and a selection of other pregnancy-

you and the best methods to help you quit.

## Most popular in: Smoking / Quit Smoking

- 1 Children's blood bears evidence of mom's smoking in pregnancy
- 2 CDC: smoking rates hit record low, but more progress needed
- 3 Cancer risk for smokeless tobacco users
- 4 Should psychiatric hospitals ban smoking completely?
- 5 Smoking hits all-time low... but not for these 3 groups
- 6 Mouth cancer now the tenth most common cancer in men
- 7 Anti-smoking messages can backfire, research suggests
- 8 Teen tobacco dependence should be treated with 'same urgency as other drugs,' study says

related outcomes.

The current study specifically looked at increased tax on cigarettes and the rate of infant mortality.

## The consequences of smoking when pregnant

The negative health impacts of smoking when pregnant are well documented. Below is a brief selection of potential negative outcomes:

- Tissue damage in the baby, particularly the lung and brain
- Links between smoking and cleft lip
- Relationship found between smoking when pregnant and miscarriage
- Placental insufficiency - placenta does not work sufficiently and may separate from the womb too early, causing bleeding
- Premature birth
- Low birth weight
- Nicotine restricts blood flow in the umbilical cord and uterus,

limiting oxygen supply to the fetus

- Reduced lung function in the newborn.

With the list above in mind, this current research is all the more vital. Lead study author Dr. Stephen Patrick says:

"Taxing cigarettes is known to help convince people to quit smoking, or not to start. This study helps physicians, public health officials and policymakers understand just how much benefit cigarette tax increases can have on infant health."

The researchers from Vanderbilt University and the University of Michigan used data collected from 1999-2010.

The main source of health information for the study was the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Wide-Ranging Online Data for Epidemiologic Research (WONDER) system. They also utilized information from a survey of retailers covering cigarette taxes and prices.

**The results of the investigation showed that a rise in tobacco**

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## taxation significantly reduced infant mortality.

Although other infant-centric parameters have been investigated previously, infant mortality in the US had not been measured in relation to tobacco taxation.

The effect differed between sections of the population. Infant mortality was found to be further reduced in black infants than non-Hispanic white infants. Black infants are twice as likely to die before their first birthday than non-Hispanic whites.

Thanks to technological advancements in health care over recent decades, severely preterm babies now have a much stronger chance of survival than ever. But, according to Dr. Patrick, more work needs to be done.

He adds a sobering rallying call to his study's conclusions:

"The US is doing worse than almost all other industrialized nations in infant deaths. The solution may lie in public health solutions that prevent infants from being born early in the first place - like cigarette taxes."

The study adds further weight to the already brimming evidence

## Suggested Reading



**Value-added Tax  
Proposal To Reform**



**WHO: countries  
must raise tobacco**

The study adds further weaponry to the already brimming armory of evidence in favor of elevated tobacco taxes. Any avenue used to attack tobacco-related deaths should be well-trodden.

Medical News Today recently covered a related study that demonstrated that the children of mothers who smoked during pregnancy [showed chemical evidence in their blood](#).

Written by [Tim Newman](#)

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**'The higher the cigarette taxes, the lower the suicide rates'**

## tax to 75% of retail price



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## References

## Additional information

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