

Tobacco tax in Saudi Arabia: 213% increase in smokers seeking help to quit

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MAKKAH: Statistics from the Ministry of Health indicated that there has been a higher demand in the Kingdom from people seeking help to give up smoking in the wake of the rise in tobacco prices announced on June 11. The rate of people seeking help from clinics has increased by 213 percent during the past three months in comparison with the same period last year.

Sharifa Al-Zahrani, the head of the ministry's smoking cessation clinics, said that taxes are the most effective way to help people, especially youths, quit smoking.

Ibrahim Al-Hamdan, the head of the Tobacco and Narcotics Combat Society, also known as Kafa, told Arab News that the excise tax is a great step that has shown success all around the world.

Al-Hamdan said that 2018 will witness a higher increase in the number of people seeking help from clinics as taxes will not be removed, adding that the rate of smoking in the US dropped from 40 to 18 percent in three decades, which is a very positive sign.

"Kafa has two sides: The first one focuses on awareness and prevention campaigns in malls, schools and public events, while the second one focuses on treatment in clinics," said Al-Hamdan.

Many people volunteer to help Kafa by telling their stories to smokers about their suffering from cancer caused by smoking, he added.

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