

Women and Smoking

A Report of the Surgeon General 2001

Women now account for 39 percent of all smoking-related deaths each year in the United States, a proportion that has more than doubled since 1965, according to a report on women and smoking by Surgeon General David Satcher. The report concludes that the increased likelihood of lung cancer, cardiovascular disease, and reproductive health problems among female smokers makes tobacco use a serious women's health issue.

Meanwhile, increased marketing by tobacco companies has stalled progress in smoking cessation by women, and recent increases in smoking among teenage girls threaten to wipe out any progress that has been made in the last few decades.

Dr. Satcher said, "Women not only share the same health risk as men, but are also faced with health consequences that are unique to women, including pregnancy complications, problems with menstrual function, and cervical cancer."

Women and Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General summarizes patterns of tobacco use among women, factors associated with starting and continuing to smoke, the health consequences of smoking, tobacco marketing targeted at women, and cessation and prevention interventions.

The report calls for increasing public awareness of the devastating impact of

smoking on women's health; exposing and countering the tobacco industry's targeting of women; encouraging public health policymakers, educators, medical professionals, and women's organizations to work for policies and programs that deglamorize and discourage tobacco use; reducing disparities related to tobacco use and its health effects among different ethnic/racial populations; decreasing nonsmokers' exposure to environmental tobacco smoke; and mounting comprehensive statewide tobacco control programs proven to be effective in reducing and preventing tobacco use.

The report outlines key solutions for preventing and reducing smoking among women, including:

- **Encouraging quitting for women of all ages.** Quitting results in immediate health benefits for both light and heavy smokers, including improvements in breathing and circulation. The excess risk of coronary heart disease is substantially reduced after one or two years of smoking cessation. The increased risk for stroke associated with smoking is reversible after quitting smoking. When smokers quit, their lungs begin to heal and their risk of lung disease drops. Smoking cessation also improves quality of life and physical functioning.
- **Implementing science-based smoking**

cessation interventions into widespread clinical practice. This action would be as cost-effective as other medical interventions such as mammography and treatment of high blood pressure.

- **Enacting comprehensive statewide tobacco control programs.** Results from states such as Arizona, California, Florida, Maine, Massachusetts, and Oregon show that science-based tobacco control programs have successfully reduced smoking rates among women and girls. California is now starting to observe the dramatic public health benefits of its sustained efforts. Between 1988 and 1997, the incidence rate of lung cancer among women declined by 4.8 percent in California but increased by 13.2 percent in other regions of the US.
- **Encouraging a more vocal constituency on issues related to women and smoking.** Concerted efforts are needed from women's and girls' organizations, women's magazines, public health policymakers, medical groups, and volunteer organizations to call public attention to lung cancer and other smoking-related diseases among women, and to call for policies and programs that deglamorize and discourage tobacco use. This effort should draw from the success of advocacy campaigns to reduce breast cancer.

A full copy of *Women and Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General* and other related information is available on the CDC's Web site:

www.cdc.gov/tobacco/sgr_forwomen.htm



Philip Morris Offers Free Book Covers

This [Philip Morris decorative] book cover is just the latest example that the war is not over. . . Tobacco companies aren't going away. . . They have to get new customers. They know if they get you when you're young, they get you for life.

Rhode Island Lt. Gov. Charles J. Fogarty. The furor over Philip Morris' book covers, millions of which have been sent to middle and high schools, is covered in, FREYER, F., Book Covers Cloud Message On Tobacco Use, Critics Say Providence Journal-Bulletin, Saturday, September 23, 2000.

As a condition of the Attorney General's settlement with the tobacco companies, Phillip Morris is prohibited from advertising to youth. In spite of this, Primedia's Cover Concepts Marketing Services is distributing 13 million "free" book covers on behalf of Phillip Morris. The inclusion of the Phillip Morris name on the cover unequivocally promotes the Phillip Morris brand name and provides a de facto marketing benefit to its tobacco products.

California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin, to County and District Superintendents. Letter to schools from Delaine Eastin, California Superintendent of Public Instruction, on Philip Morris' 'Think! Don't Smoke' book covers Tobacco BBS, Monday, November 27, 2000.

NJ Communities Against Tobacco Coalitions

Contact your local Community Against Tobacco for information about tobacco free events taking place in your community. The website contains the telephone number of each county's CAT. You can also call (609) 984-3317 to find out about the CAT in your area, by visiting the website:

www.state.nj.us/health/as/assist.htm