

TOBACCO USE

OVERVIEW:

Although tobacco use overall in the U.S. is declining, it is still a major contributor to premature death from cancer and cardiovascular disease; and in spite of aggressive anti-smoking campaigns directed at them, it is still on the rise among teenagers. Given the revelations in recent years about the addictive nature of nicotine, particularly among those who become addicted early in life, tobacco use will remain a major public health problem for decades to come and its negative impact on mortality is likely to continue unabated.

Statistically the mortality rate for “smokers” is roughly twice that of non-tobacco users, and this is reflected in premium costs. Cigarette smokers have the greatest risk of the group with lung cancer being the leading cause of death; they also have an increased risk of other forms of cancer, such as breast cancer and colon cancer. Premature death from cardiovascular causes is also noteworthy among cigarette smokers with most cases of very early onset coronary disease among males prior to age forty occurring in smokers.

While users of tobacco products other than cigarettes do not share the same ominous risk of lung cancer that cigarette smokers face, any product containing nicotine increases the cardiovascular risk to almost the same extent as cigarettes, and regular pipe and cigar smokers as well as tobacco chewers also have an increased risk of lip, tongue, and throat cancer.