
NEWS RELEASE

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New report supports link between secondhand smoke and heart attacks
Missouri health officials urge smokers to quit during Great American Smoke Out

A new report from the National Institute of Medicine confirms that secondhand tobacco smoke contributes to heart disease.

Missouri state health officials see the report as one more reason to urge smokers to quit.

The report examined 11 earlier studies, which showed a decrease in heart attacks in communities after they enacted laws to prevent smoking in public places, thereby reducing the public's exposure to secondhand smoke.

The studies consistently showed that exposure to secondhand smoke increases a person's risk of coronary heart disease by 25 to 30 percent.

Smokers are not only risking their own health, but also the health of family members, friends and others who are breathing the secondhand tobacco smoke, health officials say.

The state health department is encouraging smokers in Missouri to give up tobacco during the Great American Smokeout Thursday, Nov. 19. The state has the fourth highest smoking rate in the nation, with one in four Missouri adults regularly lighting up

"Quitting smoking is one of the most important things you can do to improve your own health and the health of others around you," said Victoria Warren, manager of the Tobacco Control Program at the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. "This research tells us that reducing secondhand smoke reduces heart disease – the leading cause of death in Missouri."

The Institute of Medicine estimates that legislation requiring public places to be smoke free saves more than a half million lives each year in the United States.

"We have known for many years that smoking increases your chances of having a heart attack. It is now clear that breathing secondhand smoke also increases your risk," Warren said. "Many nonsmokers may not realize the effect secondhand smoke has on their health."

About 43 percent of children and 37 percent of adults who do not smoke are regularly exposed to secondhand smoke in the United States.

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The state health department offers help to Missourians who want to quit smoking.

The Missouri Tobacco Quitline, coordinated by the health department, provides smokers with information and telephone-based counseling conducted by trained tobacco cessation specialists. A free "quit kit" of self-help materials is mailed to each caller.

The Quitline number is 1-800-784-8669 (1-800-Quit-Now). Calls are answered from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily. After hours, a message can be left and the call will be returned.

More information about the Institute of Medicine report can be found at www.iom.edu/secondhandsmokeeffects.

Information about the Missouri Tobacco Quitline and health risks related to smoking and secondhand smoke can be found at: www.dhss.mo.gov/SmokingAndTobacco/.

Note: Audio associated with this news release is available at: www.dhss.mo.gov/NewsAndPublicNotices/audio/smokeout-audio_2009.html

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