

Report Says Smokers Get Sick More

Journal Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The Public Health Service released a report Monday that says heavy cigarette smokers have nearly 33 per cent more chronic health conditions and lost work days than nonsmokers.

Surgeon General William H. Stewart released a study involving interviews at 42,000 households that shows 72.1 per cent of the men interviewed who smoke two or more packages of cigarettes a day had one or more chronic conditions.

Stewart said only 37.1 per cent of the nonsmokers have such conditions. He said 51.5 per cent of the men smoking less than half a package of cigarettes daily experience these conditions. There was a similar situation among women, he said, with 57.1 per cent of the light smokers and 85.3 per cent of the heavy smokers reporting chronic conditions.

Institute's Report

While Public Health Service officials were distributing the 64-page report, the Tobacco Institute was distributing a seven-page "critique" of the report. The Tobacco Institute is a trade association whose members include most major cigarette manufacturers.

By singling out smoking, the institute said, "the report ignores the fact that people differ in countless ways, apart from whether they smoke or not. Many of these other differences — diet, manner of living, occupation, physical and emotional makeup, inherited characteristics — can obviously have an important influence on one's health."

The institute said that had such differences been included in the study, "surely the results would have been strikingly different — and more useful to the scientific community."

Several Tables

The report was prepared by the National Center for Health Services, an agency of the Public Health Service. Information was obtained by government interviews who visited 42,000 households between July, 1961, and June, 1965. About 134,000 persons live in the households visited.

The report says that persons interviewed were asked about their smoking habits only after they had been asked about their health. "In this manner a possible source of . . . bias was eliminated," the report says.

The report contains several tables indicating health and work — less patterns among

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Report Says Smokers Have More Ailments

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smokers and non-smokers. In general, the statistics indicate that heavy smokers have more "disability days" than light smokers, regardless of sex, and that the health differences between smokers and non-smokers become more apparent as people grow older.

Public health service officials selected the work-loss statistic as the key element. Those statistics show that males who now smoke are absent from work 1.3 times as often as males who do not smoke, and that females who smoke are absent from work 1.4 times as often as females who do not smoke.

The public health service estimated, on the basis of the study, that "there are 77 million excess lost work days associated with cigarette smoking each year" — "excess" days being those work days which would not have been lost had the rates for smokers and non-smokers been the same.

"The excess loss . . . represents nearly 18 per cent of the entire annual work loss in the United States resulting from illness," the agency said.

The report showed that 58 per cent of the males who smoke have chronic health problems, as opposed to 53.3 per cent of the males who had never smoked. The corresponding percentages for females are 64.4 per cent for those who smoke and 60 per cent for those who have never smoked.

Lung cancer was not among the chronic diseases covered in the study. The report explains that "the survey is restricted to a sample of persons living at the time of the interview. The survival rate of persons diagnosed with lung cancer is low."

The Tobacco Institute complained in its "critique" that "most of the information in the report is based on self-diagnosis and second-hand information." For example, wives often were asked questions about their husbands.

The institute pointed out that the report shows that former smokers have higher rates of most health problems studied than do people who now smoke. "This does not suggest that giving up smoking is harmful, any more than it suggests it might be helpful," the institute said.

The institute pointed out several other findings in the report. For example:

—The report says, "present smokers who smoked up to a pack a day had a rate (of heart conditions) about the same as that for the never smokers."

—The report shows that female smokers had fewer heart conditions and hypertension problems than females who never smoked.

The institute pointed out also that the report "rates associations between smoking and injuries and arthritis as examples of associations not so easily explained."

"Is it not possible that some of the other association's conclusions may also be questionable?" the institute asked.

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Smokers, Ailments Connected

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Public Health Service said Monday heavy cigarette smokers have nearly 33 per cent more chronic health conditions and lost work days than nonsmokers.

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Stewart said only 37.1 per cent of the nonsmokers have such conditions. He said 51.5 per cent of the men smoking less than half a package of cigarettes daily experience these conditions.

There was a similar situation among women, he said, with 57.1 per cent of the light smokers and 85.3 per cent of the heavy smokers reporting chronic conditions.

The Tobacco Institute Inc., an organization that speaks for the major tobacco firms, declared the report could be highly misleading.

"This type of study does not provide any answers to the basic questions about smoking and health," it said.

"This appears to be a study based largely on self-diagnosis and second-hand information."

The institute said that 77 million lost work days that would not have occurred if cigarette smokers had the same work rates as nonsmokers.

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