



HEALTH MATTERS

• I N - F O C U S •

World No Tobacco Day

Shocking international statistics shows that:

- 38 million boys and girls aged 13-15 consumed tobacco products.
- 9 out of 10 smokers start before the age of 18.
- Over 2/3 of those trying just one cigarette go on to become daily smokers.

In South Africa, statistics shows among youth (ages 13-15), 21.5% are current tobacco product users. It is thus with good reason that the theme for 2024 World No Tobacco day is:

“Protecting children from tobacco industry interference”.



Aim and Objectives

The aim of No Tobacco day is to raise awareness about the health risks associated with tobacco use and to advocate for effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption globally.

The intention is to protect future generations and to ensure tobacco consumption keeps on declining.

There has been indeed a noticeable decline in global tobacco use from 1.36 billion in 2000 to 1.25 billion users ages 15 and older although the decrease is less substantial than hoped for.

Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the influence of tobacco marketing. With the rise of social media and streaming platforms the tobacco industry's targeted campaigns are increasingly reaching young people, putting their health at risk and perpetuating the cycle of addiction.

Health risks and statistics

Tobacco use is linked to at least 20 types of cancer and is the leading preventative cause of cancer globally. The tobacco industry's marketing practices contribute to 25% of all cancers deaths amounting to approximately 2,4 million deaths annually worldwide.

This makes it a significant public health concern. Tobacco use and second-hand smoke are known to contribute to around 12% of all deaths from heart disease in South Africa. Over 39 000 South Africans die from tobacco-related diseases each year.

Findings

The numbers show that while tobacco control measures are effective in curbing consumption, sustained efforts are needed to see them implemented more widely.

The tobacco industry's sustained tactics is to recruit young people as lifelong consumers by marketing new products such as e-cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snus pouches and using digital platforms to bypass traditional advertising restrictions

Recommendations

The Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), and local training institutions and governing departments should:

- Advocate for increased taxation.
- More smoke-free areas.
- Stricter regulations on sales and marketing of tobacco products.
- Stricter regulations on the exploitation of digital platforms to target young consumers.

Reference:

1. <https://www.uicc.org> dated 04 May 2024
2. <https://southafrica.tobaccocontroldata.org> dated 2021