

Half a million children predicted to die from smoking as MPs head toward a vote on standard cig packs

27 February 2015

500,000 CHILDREN



Around 500,000 children will die from smoking when they are adults unless more is done to cut smoking rates according to new Cancer Research UK figures released today (Friday).

Based on current [smoking rates](#) Cancer Research UK estimates that of today's 12 million under 16 year olds, 2.7 million will become smokers as young adults. This could lead to around half a million smoking related deaths unless rates fall.

This shocking statistic has prompted the charity to renew its call for MPs to back the introduction of plain, standardised [tobacco](#) packaging when they vote on the issue in the coming weeks.

Smoking rates have fallen to around a fifth of the population but the decline has slowed in recent years. Cancer Research UK wants to sharpen the decline to help reduce the number of young people who start smoking and go on to become addicted to tobacco.

With overwhelming support from both the public

and health communities - as well as backing across the political spectrum - Public Health Minister, Jane Ellison announced in January that the Government would vote on standardised tobacco packaging before the general election in May.

These new packs would then be introduced across the UK in 2016.

Sarah Woolnough, Cancer Research UK's executive director of policy, said: "Our latest calculations reveal the appallingly high number of lives that will be lost unless we move faster to reduce the lethal impact of tobacco.

"We must challenge the idea that tobacco is a normal product if we're to stop tobacco killing so many people. For too long tobacco has been allowed to cause illness and death. If we're serious about health, we must do more to reduce smoking rates. Three years ago we began campaigning for cigarettes to be sold only in plain, standardised packaging which evidence shows reduces the appeal of tobacco to children. We are delighted the Government is committed to achieving this, and the time has come to vote to save the lives of future generations."

There is strong evidence from Australia that standard packaging of tobacco is hitting sales of this deadly product. Between 2010 and 2013 – the period where standard packs were introduced – Australia saw a 15 per cent reduction in [smoking prevalence](#). Data also confirmed that fewer young people are taking up the habit.

Official statistics from Australia also reveal that the level of illegal, counterfeit tobacco has not climbed since the new packs have been introduced.

Provided by Cancer Research UK

APA citation: Half a million children predicted to die from smoking as MPs head toward a vote on standard cig packs (2015, February 27) retrieved 5 May 2021 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-02-million-children-die-mps-vote.html>

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