

Current major event

World No Tobacco Day 2021

Tobacco cessation and control are a major challenge to world health, with millions of people dying each year from direct and indirect cause of smoking. World No Tobacco Day draws global attention to the tobacco epidemic.

Editorial note

The tobacco epidemic is a huge issue worldwide, posing one of the most significant threats to global health. Over 1.3 billion people use tobacco, with over 8 million people being killed every year across the globe, including 1.2 million from second-hand smoke. The World Health Assembly established World No Tobacco Day in 1987 and since then has been observed every year to raise awareness about the dangers of using tobacco across the globe.

Smoking cessation is challenging, but there are many reasons to stop. For example, circulation and lung function will increase 2–12 weeks after quitting tobacco, while coughing and shortness of breath will decrease after 1–9 months. Quitting tobacco will also reduce the harm of second-hand smoke in children, such as respiratory diseases and ear infections. (See table 1)

In addition to these harmful effects, quitting tobacco is particularly essential for the coronavirus pandemic because smoking is associated with increased severity of disease and death in hospitalized patients. (See above) COVID-19 encouraged many smokers to quit tobacco, but they do not have adequate means or support to do so. The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean in collaboration with the member states provides advice, technical and programmatic support together with the tools and resources to encourage smokers to quit all across the 22 countries of the Region.

In 2021, WHO launched several global campaigns which aim to support 100 million people across the globe to stop tobacco use under the slogan “Commit to Quit”. This campaign is delivered

Reasons to quit tobacco

- Smokers have a greater risk of developing severe disease and dying from COVID-19
- Tobacco affects your looks almost immediately
- It threatens the health of your friends and family, not just you
- Smoking or using e-cigarettes around children compromises their health and safety
- Tobacco use has negative social consequences.
- It is expensive — you could be spending your money on more important things
- Tobacco causes over 20 types of cancer
- Smokers are more likely to lose their vision and hearing
- Tobacco and nicotine use harm your baby
- Tobacco pollutes the environment

WHO/PAHO, available at: <https://www.paho.org/en/more-100-reasons-quit-tobacco>

Table 1: Beneficial health changes that take place when you quit:

- In 20 minutes, your heart rate and blood pressure drop.
- In 12 hours, the carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal.
- In 2–12 weeks, your circulation improves and your lung function increases.
- In 1–9 months, coughing and shortness of breath decrease.
- In 1 year, your risk of coronary heart disease is about half that of a smoker's.
- 5 years, your stroke risk is reduced to that of a nonsmoker 5 to 15 years after quitting.
- 10 years, your risk of lung cancer falls to about half that of a smoker and your risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, cervix, and pancreas decreases.
- 15 years, the risk of coronary heart disease is that of a nonsmoker's.

Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/tobacco-health-benefits-of-smoking-cessation>

through various initiatives and through social media, and aims to help smokers give up smoking by advocating for solid tobacco cessation policies and promoting increased access to cessation services.

In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, the Ministry of Health and WHO country office in Jordan raised awareness among all smokers in the country to protect their health during the pandemic. Jordan is the first country in the world to benefit from a donation of nicotine replacement therapy. Her Royal Highness Princess Dina Mired received WHO's World No Tobacco Day 2021 award for her accomplishments as the leading advocate and prominent figure for tobacco control in Jordan.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

COVID-19 in 22 EMR countries

Current public health events of concern [cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): 2019-2021

Afghanistan	[125 937 (5283), 4.2%]
Bahrain	[266 286 (1358), 0.5%]
Djibouti	[11 604 (155), 1.3%]
Egypt	[281 903 (16 242), 5.8%]
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	[3 241 037 (84627), 2.6%]
Iraq	[1 365 211 (17281), 1.3%]
Jordan	[752 617 (9769), 1.3%]
Kuwait	[362 018 (2005), 0.6%]
Lebanon	[545 363 (7859), 1.4%]
Libya	[195 042 (3211), 1.6%]
Morocco	[533 945 (9315), 1.7%]
occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)	[343 333 (3838), 1.1%]
Oman	[273 894 (3238), 1.2%]
Pakistan	[962 313 (22 408), 2.3%]
Qatar	[222 453 (592), 0.3%]
Saudi Arabia	[491 612 (7863), 1.6%]
Somalia	[14 946 (775), 5.2%]
Sudan	[36 799 (2760), 7.5%]
Syrian Arab Republic	[25 619 (1885), 7.4%]
Tunisia	[443 631 (15 377), 3.5%]
United Arab Emirates	[637 877 (1831), 0.3%]
Yemen	[6926 (1361), 19.7%]