

The Cost of Smoking

Smoking is an act many partake in every day in every time zone in every country on Earth. This is to say they draw in and exhale smoke from a cigarette, a cigar or a pipe. It is an act that costs individuals smokers and non-smokers in many ways. The cost can be discussed in terms of economic, social and maybe the most costly health wise. This essay will discuss and evaluate the cost of smoking in terms of health, economic, and social costs.

Firstly this essay will look at the cost of smoking from the social point of view. Smoking is deadly. It kills through cancer, heart and circulatory diseases, emphysema, fires and many other causes. However most people recognize the physical assault smoking exerts on the smoker but many fail to consider the psychological, emotional and social toll caused by cigarettes.

Since the majority of smokers do not smoke, smokers are coming under more and more harassment these days. Today in some cases smokers are also feeling like social outcasts, they are no longer comfortable smoking. Smokers are now finding themselves in situations where smoking is no longer permitted, many smokers everyday go through eight hours of peak physical withdrawal symptoms as they are no longer permitted to smoke at work. They may even go to social gatherings and find they are the only person smoking in a room. They even feel unwanted in the homes of their best friends, when they light up and feel they can either endure the withdrawal symptoms from not smoking or suffer the embarrassment of smoking. People today feel they have the right to breathe clean and feel they can impose this right onto smokers to put their cigars, cigarettes or pipe out. This very bad news to smokers as they are now feeling more and more ostracised for a habit many feel they cannot quit. They feel every time they smoke that it is wrong dirty and therefore socially unacceptable.

Smoking can also hinder a person's performance. This is as when a smoker is experiencing withdrawal symptoms, they are deprived of nicotine (a substance in cigarettes). Nicotine deprivation can seriously impair attention and cognition. This may result in someone at work not fulfilling his or her full potential and may even in some circumstances result in job loss. Another social cost is the fact that smokers feel more stressed than non-smokers at times when they are not part taking in this activity. In fact surveys show that non-smokers are far less stressed, this due to the fact that smokers experience negative moods during acute nicotine deprivation. Nicotine withdrawal is characterised by feelings of stress, irritability and anger. These mood changes can be experienced at thirty to forty minute intervals between smoking in regular smokers.

For the regular smoker the pleasure of tobacco goes far beyond what nicotine does to the system however. Smoking becomes a way of life. The smoker enjoys the whole experience; the routine of handling the pack and the cigarette, lighting up, gazing into the flame, the oral satisfaction of drawing, the taste and the smell of the cigarette. Eating and drinking are synergistic with smoking: they each enhance the taste of the

smoke, and smoking enhances the contemplation of the food and drink and with this in mind it is no wonder smokers find it hard to quit, this is another cost of smoking itself as the smoker may be addicted for life.

Secondly this essay will consider the economic costs of smoking. Firstly the actual cost to the smoker economically is immense, there are many other ways the smoker could better spend the money. In fact the cost is so immense for regular smokers that the money they could save per month may even total a figure of:

The image is a screenshot of a web-based 'Cost of Smoking Calculator'. At the top, the title 'Cost of Smoking Calculator' is displayed in a blue box. Below the title, there is a banner with the text 'Learn how to protect your customers online.' and a 'VeriSign' logo with the tagline 'The Value of Trust'. A link 'Click here for a FREE GUIDE' is also present. The main section is titled 'Your results' and contains the following text: 'If you quit today, you will save: → \$ 240.00 in the next month.' Below this, it states: 'This figure is based on 40 cigarettes smoked a day at \$ 2.00 per pack.' A black arrow points from the left towards the '\$ 240.00' result.

This would then save them around \$2920.00 which could be better spent on a holiday or even saving for a new car.

The smokers themselves do not only feel this economic cost, it is felt by governments and taxpayers in the government expenditure to sustain smokers' lives. In 1991, smoking-attributable health care costs in Canada were \$2.5 billion (CAN). Additional smoking-attributable costs included \$1.5 billion for residential care, \$2 billion due to workers' absenteeism, \$80 million due to fires and \$10.5 billion due to lost future income caused by premature death. According to this analysis, smokers cost society about \$15 billion while contributing roughly \$7.8 billion in taxes. The results indicate that smoking-attributable costs in Canada have increased steadily since 1966 to the 1991 value of \$15 billion. Numerous studies purport to show that smokers are costing "society" amounts, which vary from 22 pence to 4.80 for each pack they smoke. Another study of the cost taken in America show:

EXPENSES

\$26.9 billion, hospitals

\$15.5 billion, doctors

\$4.9 billion, nursing homes

\$1.8 billion, prescription drugs

\$900 million, home health care

TOTAL

\$50 billion

PER PACK

\$2.06

TAXPAYER BILL

\$21.6 billion, or 89 cents per pack

This gives information about the costs smokers are placing on the American government. It then goes on to state the total cost and the average price of a pack of cigarettes and using a complicated calculation works out the taxpayer cost and then how much it is costing taxpayers per pack. According to these results taxpayers pay for 89 cents or 49 per cent of every pack a smoker smokes in taxes.

However this may seem a little misleading as smokers contribute to society in their taxes and in the jobs they perform. The government also receives money from taxes on tobacco sales and saves money on social security due to premature deaths and in France due to this a profit was made. However the case was very different in Britain and America as well as Canada where governments are becoming more active in trying to reduce this expenditure.

Thirdly this essay will look at the cost of smoking from a medical and biological point of view. There are many harmful costs of smoking, the biggest being your life. These harmful effects can range from hair loss to death. These harmful effects are talked of in detail below.

Hair Loss

Smoking weakens the immune system, leaving the body more vulnerable to diseases such as lupus erythematosus, which can cause hair loss, ulcerations in the mouth and rashes on the face, scalp, and hands.

Cataracts

Smoking is believed to cause or worsen several eye conditions. Those who smoke more than 20 cigarettes a day are twice as likely to develop cataracts, a clouding of the eye's lens that blocks light and may lead to blindness.

Wrinkling

Smoking prematurely ages skin by wearing away proteins that give it elasticity, depleting it of vitamin A and restricting blood flow. Smokers' skin is dry, leathery and etched with tiny lines, especially around the lips, and eyes: In one study, smokers in their 40s had facial wrinkles similar to those of non-smokers 20 years older.

Hearing Loss

Because smoking creates plaque on blood vessel walls, decreasing blood flow to the inner ear, smokers can lose their hearing earlier than non-smokers (up to 16 years sooner, according to one study) and are more prone to hearing loss caused by ear infections or loud noise.

Skin Cancer

Smoking does not cause melanoma (a sometimes deadly form of skin cancer), but it does increase your chances of dying from it (this may be because smoking impairs the immune system). Smokers also have a 50 percent greater risk of contracting squamous cell carcinoma - a cancer that leaves scaly, reddish eruptions on the skin.

Tooth Decay

Smoking interferes with the mouth's chemistry, creating excess plaque, yellowing teeth and contributing to tooth decay. Smokers are one and a half times more likely to lose their teeth.

Cancer

At least 60 elements in tobacco smoke have been shown to cause cancer, according to Action on Smoking and Health. Male smokers are 22 times more likely to develop lung cancer than non-smokers. According to a number of studies, the longer a person smokes, the greater the risk of developing a number of other cancers, including cancer of the nose; tongue, mouth, salivary gland and pharynx; throat; oesophagus, kidneys, penis, pancreas, and anus. The link between smoking and breast cancer is perhaps the most controversial. While some evidence suggest smoking increases a woman's risk of developing the cancer, other evidence indicates that, by lowering oestrogen levels, smoking actually reduces the risk.

Lung Ailments

In the former Soviet bloc, 88,000 smokers die each year from debilitating lung conditions other than lung cancer. Emphysema develops from bronchitis, it is a swelling and rupturing of the lung's air sacs (see diagram) this reduces the lungs' capacity to take in oxygen (and expel carbon dioxide). In extreme cases, a tracheotomy helps patients breathe: An opening is cut in the windpipe, allowing a ventilator to force air into the lungs. Chronic bronchitis creates a build up of pus-filled mucus, resulting in a painful cough and breathing difficulties. Smoking accounts for about 80-90% of all chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (emphysema, chronic mucus secretion, chronic air flow blocks). Smoking is involved in 85% of all lung cancer deaths. An individual with chronic bronchitis (which is caused by smoking) is more likely to get a bacterial infection if he or she is a smoker. A smoker gets more nose and throat inflammations, respiratory infections, and chronic bronchitis.

Osteoporosis

Carbon monoxide, the main poisonous gas in car exhaust fumes and cigarette smoke, binds to blood much more readily than oxygen, cutting the oxygen-carrying power of

heavy smokers' blood by as much as 15 percent. As a result, smokers' bones lose density, fracture more easily and take up to 80 percent longer to heal.

Heart Disease

Smoking-related cardiovascular disease kills more than 600,000 people each year in the world's developed countries. Smoking makes the heart beat faster, raises blood pressure and increases the risk of hypertension and clogged arteries. Cigarette smoking accounts for 30% of all heart disease deaths. The carbon monoxide in the cigarette smoke increases the amount of cholesterol clogging the arteries. Smoking causes a stiffness in the walls of the arteries which is harmful to the artery and increases the risk for the artery to rupture. The nicotine in cigarettes can raise your blood pressure, heart rate, and the oxygen demand for muscles, especially the heart (the heart is a muscle). A coronary spasm may occur during smoking, which may lead to chest pain, and a heart attack. Blood clots more readily in smokers than in non-smokers.

Psoriasis

Smokers are two to three times as likely to develop psoriasis, a non-contagious inflammatory skin condition that leaves itchy, oozing red patches all over the body.

Stomach Ulcers

Smoking reduces resistance to the bacteria that cause stomach ulcers. It also impairs the stomach's ability neutralize acid after a meal, leaving the acid to eat away at the stomach lining.

Discoloured Fingers

The tar in cigarette smoke collects on the fingers and fingernails, staining them a yellowish-brown.

Buerger's Disease

Smoking can damage blood vessel walls, making it difficult for the heart to pump blood to the extremities. In serious cases, Buerger's Disease can lead to gangrene (the death of body tissue) and even the amputation of a limb.

Cervical Cancer

Besides increasing the risk of cervical and uterine cancer, smoking can create fertility problems for women and complications during pregnancy and childbirth. And smoking lowers oestrogen levels, speeding up menopause.

Deformed Sperm

Smoking can deform sperm and damage its DNA, causing miscarriage or birth defects. In fact, men who smoke more than 20 cigarettes a day have an extra 42 percent chance of fathering a child who contracts cancer. Smoking also diminishes sperm count and reduces the blood flow to the penis, sometimes causing impotence.

Passive (Second Hand) Smoking

It is estimated that there are about 53,000 deaths per year as a result of passive smoking in the US alone. 37,000 of these deaths come from cardiovascular disease.

The effects of tobacco smoke are just as bad, if not worse, in non-smokers as in smokers. All of the risks for smokers also hold true for exposure to second hand smoke, in fact seventy five percent of the harmful effects of smoking are passed on by passive smoking. Tobacco smoke is made up of many hazardous vapours and particles that when inhaled are harmful to both the smoker and to others around him or her. The smoke at the end of a burning cigarette has more particles that are smaller and more harmful than the smoke directly inhaled by the smoker. These smaller particles go deeper into the lung tissue and do more damage. Carbon Monoxide from passive smoke causes greater lack of oxygen in non-smokers than the. With reduced oxygen, the heart, lungs and brain cannot function properly. This leads to permanent brain and vascular (blood vessel) change. When a non-smoker marries a smoker, the risk of getting lung cancer and/or heart disease is doubled. Infants and children have tender tissues and are more susceptible to second hand smoke. They develop many lung problems (allergies, asthma, chronic bronchitis, heart problems). Many develop cancers when they get older. Children of parents who smoke, are hospitalised more frequently for bronchitis and pneumonia during their first year of life and have more acute respiratory illnesses before the age of two. They also have more cough and phlegm problems and have more chronic ear infections.

There are many medical costs of smoking yet sceptics doubt that any are actually related to this habit. The graphs below indicate otherwise. In the First World War smoking became very popular with men and became fashionable with women in the 1940' the graph below shows that deaths from lung cancer increased dramatically as the habit of smoking became more popular and widespread. In contrast deaths from tuberculosis and bronchitis fell due to improved medical care.

Statistics also showed a link between the number of cigarettes people smoke per day and the risk of dying from lung cancer. This second graph below shows the more cigarettes smoked per day increase the chances of dying from lung cancer.

There are also links between cigarettes smoked daily and the risk of dying from heart disease.

In conclusion, smoking has many horrifying costs these costs have been discussed in terms of economics, social costs and medical costs. The cost of smoking has always been immense and in today's society it is even worse. Governments are facing the problem of having to cut expenditure to sustain smokers in their society and smokers themselves now feel outcasts. However the biggest and most dangerous cost is the loss of the smokers' life. It was Ghandi who once stated that "Life is precious and should be treated as such and not thrown away just to satisfy an urge."