



Smokefree Background Information

www.workwell.health.nz

Overview

Smoking kills more people in New Zealand each year than road crashes, alcohol, other drugs, suicide, murder and drowning combined. Smoking has negative effects on the health and wellbeing of employees and their whānau. However, it's never too late to stop. Here are just some of the health benefits that employees may notice if they stop smoking in time:

- Within 20 minutes - blood pressure and pulse return to normal
- Within 8 to 24 hours - the body's oxygen levels return to normal and the chance of heart attack decreases
- Within 48 hours - nerve endings start to re-grow
- Within 3 months - the risk of colds, flu and pneumonia decrease and lung function increases up to 30%
- Within 1 to 9 months - a decrease in coughing, congestion, and shortness of breath
- After 1 year - the risk of heart disease is to half that of a smoker
- After 5 years – lung cancer death rate and risk of mouth, throat and oesophagus cancers are halved
- After 10 years - the lung cancer death rate is similar to that of someone who has never smoked
- After 15 years - the risk of heart disease is that of someone who has never smoked

Implications for health and wellbeing

Smoking has many negative effects, both for the person who smokes and others exposed to second-hand smoke.

- Every cigarette increases heart rate and blood pressure, reduces oxygen to feet and hands and narrows the small blood vessels under the skin
- Smoking causes gum disease, loss of taste, stained teeth, mouth sores and bad breath
- Smoking while pregnant is harmful to both mother and baby and puts the baby at risk of glue ear, asthma, leukaemia and Sudden Unexplained Death in infancy (SUDI)
- Smoking increases the risk of developing cancers of the lung, oral cavity, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus and pancreas and diseases of the urinary tract, pelvis, bladder and digestive tract
- Smoking causes one in four of all cancer deaths in New Zealand
- People who smoke inhale more than 4,000 harmful chemicals including acetone (paint stripper), ammonia (toilet cleaner), cyanide (rat killer), DDT (insecticide) and carbon monoxide (car exhaust fumes)
- Smoking is a major cause of blindness, with about 1,300 people in New Zealand having untreatable blindness due to current and past



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smoking

Smoking in New Zealand

[The New Zealand Census 2013](#) identified:

- Nearly 1 in 7 adults (15%) smoke
- Smoking rates have decreased from 23.7% in 1996 to 15% in 2013
- Māori (32.7%) and Pacific (23.2%) adults have higher rates of smoking than Asian (7.6%) and NZ/European (13%) adults
- Males (16.4%) are slightly more likely to smoke than females (13.9%)

The [Health of NZ Adults Survey 2011/12](#) found that:

- Those in higher deprivation areas (28%) were more likely to smoke than less deprived areas (11%)
- Majority of smoking adults (63%) have 6 – 20 cigarettes a day, with a further 9% smoking 21+ cigarettes per day
- Youth (15-17 years) smoking daily has decreased from 14% in 2006/2007 to 6% in 2011/2012

[Facts about smoking:](#)

- 5,000 New Zealanders die each year from smoking and 350 die from second-hand smoke
- In New Zealand, smoking is the main cause of preventable death
- 50% of long-term smokers will die from a smoking-related illness

- Children with a parent who smokes are three times more likely to smoke themselves

In the workplace

Smoking in the workplace has adverse effects on both employee health and productivity. [Legislation](#) requires all workplaces maintain a smokefree environment throughout indoor areas and, designated smoking areas meet particular standards to ensure minimal harm to those working or taking a break in close proximity.

New Zealand became one of the first countries in the world to legislate smokefree indoor office environments with the [Smoke-free Environments Act 1990](#). The Act now includes smokefree environments for all licensed premises (bars, restaurants, cafes, sports clubs, casinos) and other workplaces (offices, factories, warehouses, work canteen, 'smoko' rooms).

Some [facts about smoking in the workplace:](#)

- People who smoke take around 3 times more sick leave
- If a person takes four extra 10 minute smoking breaks each day, they work a month less in a year
- Studies estimate that employees who smoke can cost employers more than \$2,000 per annum

[Benefits](#) to employers for promoting a smoke free workplace:



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- improved employee health and reduced sick leave
- increased staff productivity - staff take fewer breaks
- decreased risk of early death or early retirement due to smoking related illness
- better corporate image

Key Messages

- Smoking is addictive and harmful
- One of the most important things that someone can do for their health is to become smokefree
- Receiving support to quit smoking such as nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) or seeking advice from a smoking cessation specialist can increase quit success
- The workplace can support employees to be smokefree by creating a healthy culture and environment

Incorporating Smokefree into your Workplace

Your efforts to promote and increase employee smokefree lifestyles within your workplace should consider a multi-level approach to ensure effectiveness and sustainability. A multi-level approach involves considering what is available at each of the following levels:

- Organisational (Policies and procedures)
- Environmental (Infrastructure and facilities)
- Individual (Opportunities, information and training)