

Kentucky Must Reduce the Impact of Smoking To Improve Health Outcomes

General Message

Kentucky has one of the highest smoking rates in the nation. Unfortunately along with high smoking rates come high instances of chronic illness. Kentucky leads the nation in lung cancer rates and yet is one of only 12 states that fail to protect nonsmokers from secondhand smoke exposure in public places. The KMA supports a two-part approach to reducing health risks associated with smoking. This includes the passage of a statewide smoke-free ordinance for public places and coverage of both physician-based counseling and approved smoking cessation therapies and medications.

Message #1 (The ISSUE) – Kentucky has high rates of tobacco use along with policies that do not protect against secondhand smoke, both of which lead to high instances of chronic illness and negative health outcomes.

Supporting Points:

- According to the CDC, tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable disease, disability and death in the United States.
- Secondhand smoke contains 250 toxic chemicals and more than 70 known carcinogens. Health authorities have concluded that even brief exposure to secondhand smoke can trigger heart attacks and other health problems. Yet only 32% of Kentuckians are currently protected under local smoke-free ordinances.
- According to the Surgeon General, there is no safe level of secondhand smoke exposure, and studies show that secondhand smoke causes an estimated 50,000 deaths each year in the U.S. mostly due to lung cancer and coronary heart disease.

Message #2 (The PROBLEM) – Kentucky's high rate of chronic illness is costing our state millions yearly in health care costs and lost productivity, as well as the significant loss of life.

Supporting Points:

- Risk for heart disease increases 25-30% and risk for lung cancer increases 20-30% in nonsmokers who work in smoke-filled environments.
- Tobacco use costs Kentucky nearly \$2 billion in health care costs and nearly \$3 billion in lost productivity every year. Secondhand smoke exposure costs Kentucky \$100 million a year in direct medical costs.
- More than 41,200 nonsmokers die each year in the U.S. from illnesses caused by secondhand smoke exposure.

Message #3 (The SOLUTION) – Kentucky must pass a statewide indoor smoke-free ordinance that protects nonsmokers from secondhand smoke. Additionally, Kentucky insurers should adequately cover both counseling and approved treatments for those wanting to quit smoking.

Supporting Points:

- Smoke-free laws are popular among the public, a recent poll found that 66% of Kentuckians favor a statewide indoor smoke-free ordinance for public places.
- Research, including a 2009 Institute of Medicine study, finds that smoke-free laws reduce risk of heart attack and heart disease and encourage smokers to quit.
- But legislation can only go so far. The best way to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke is to reduce smoking in general. Therefore, KMA encourages Kentucky to require insurers to adequately cover physician-based counseling and approved forms of smoking cessation treatment and medications.

Kentucky must reduce the impact tobacco use has on its communities, workforce and health outcomes. Two significant ways to reduce the burden of chronic illness caused by smoking are passing a statewide indoor smoke-free ordinance and adequate coverage of counseling and approved smoking cessation treatments.