

Current Health Event

World No Tobacco Day 2014 "Raise Taxes on Tobacco"

On World No Tobacco Day (WNTD), 31 May 2014, the WHO calls on countries to raise tobacco taxes to encourage users to stop and prevent other people from becoming addicted to tobacco.

Editorial note:

Higher taxes on tobacco raise more revenue for governments and health programmes, reduce tobacco use and lead to healthier communities and healthier economies.

On the basis of evidence from more than 100 studies, including those undertaken in low and middle-income countries, the single most efficient tool to curb noncommunicable diseases is to heavily tax tobacco. *The Lancet* (2013)

Under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), countries should implement tax and price policies on tobacco products as a way to reduce tobacco consumption. Research shows that higher taxes are especially effective in reducing tobacco use among lower-income groups and in preventing young people from starting to smoke. A tax increase that increases tobacco prices by 10% decreases tobacco consumption by about 4% in high-income countries and by up to 8% in most low- and middle-income countries.

Furthermore, increasing excise taxes on tobacco is considered to be the most cost-effective tobacco control measure. The World Health Report 2010 indicated that a 50% increase in tobacco excise taxes would generate a little more than US\$ 1.4 billion in additional funds in 22 low-income countries.

Figure: Weighted average price of the most sold brand, excise tax per pack and total tax share by WHO region, 2012.



PPP: Purchasing power parity.

"By raising tobacco taxes", says Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, "we can reduce tobacco use and prevent young people from starting to smoke".

Compared to other WHO regions, the Eastern Mediterranean region has the second lowest tobacco prices and taxation rates.

WNTD messages

1. Raising taxes on tobacco is both the most effective and cost-effective way of reducing tobacco use around the world.
2. Death and disease go down as tobacco taxes go up.
3. Raising taxes on tobacco is a win-win situation. It is good for people's health and good for the economy.

Lebanon was one of the first signatory countries of the WHO FCTC. A National Program for Tobacco control was established in 1997 jointly between the Ministry of Public Health and WHO. WHO Lebanon supports the implementation of effective tobacco control interventions in line with best practice and evidence-based policies. Lebanon issued the law 174 on Tobacco Control in Public Places based on the WHO FCTC and is working towards its implementation.

Cumulative Notifiable diseases in Lebanon (Syrian)

Disease	2013 Cumul	2014 Cumul*	May	Jun
Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
Polio	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Acute Flaccid Paralysis	34(7)	16(6)	2(0)	1(0)
Measles	1760(232)	203(76)	23(9)	15(5)
Mumps	14(2)	268(33)	48(5)	4(0)
Pertussis	59(9)	36(11)	2(1)	5(0)
Rabies	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Rubella	27(1)	10(6)	1(0)	0(0)
Tetanus	4(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Viral Hep B	141(8)	101(14)	27(5)	3(0)
Water/Food Borne Diseases				
Brucellosis	189(12)	105(13)	32(7)	10(0)
Hydatid cyst	13(3)	9(0)	3(0)	0(0)
Typhoid Fever	407(21)	77(6)	11(2)	3(1)
Viral Hep A	1551(220)	615(104)	58(21)	17(2)
Other Diseases				
Leishmaniasis	1033(1032)	293(290)	22(22)	0(0)
Meningitis	204(24)	90(8)	16(1)	4(0)
Viral Hep C	103(4)	38(1)	6(0)	3(0)

Source: Ministry of Public Health, Lebanon