

AMOUNT OF NICOTINE IN CIGARETTES INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY SINCE 1998

The amount of nicotine a smoker gets from smoking a cigarette has increased steadily over the past seven years, according to a new report released by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH).

The study found that, regardless of brand, the amount of nicotine that is actually delivered to the smoker's lungs has increased significantly. The data was collected from reports submitted to DPH from 1998 to 2004 by all tobacco companies that sell cigarettes in the state, as required by Massachusetts General Law Chapter 307B and Department of Public Health Regulations CMR 660.000. Massachusetts is one of only three states in the country to require tobacco companies to submit this information annually.

"This data is significant," said DPH Commissioner Paul Cote, "since this is the first US release of information on nicotine yield in more than six years. We want health care providers to know that smokers are getting more nicotine than in the past, and they may need additional help in trying to quit."

The report also found:

- Overall, nicotine yields increased ten percent from 1998 – 2004.
- As of 2004, ninety-three percent of all cigarette brands were rated high nicotine.
- Marlboro, Newport, and Camel, the three most popular brands chosen by youth smokers, all delivered significantly more nicotine.
- Kool, a popular menthol brand, increased 20%. More than two thirds of African American smokers use menthol brands.

According to a number of major recent health studies, the nicotine in tobacco is a highly addictive drug that affects nearly every organ in the body.

- Increased levels of nicotine may make it more difficult for the average smoker to quit.
- Increased levels of nicotine consumed by pregnant women can lead to developmental delays in childhood as well as low birth weight infants.
- Nicotine changes the way that insulin works in the body. Smoking raises blood sugar levels, placing smokers at higher risk for developing diabetes and making it harder for those who already have diabetes to control blood sugar levels.
- Medications that treat depression and other mental illnesses can lose their effectiveness when combined with nicotine.
- Non-smokers, especially children, who are exposed to secondhand smoke can inhale up to seven times the amount of nicotine inhaled by a smoker.

Eighteen percent of Massachusetts adults smoke, which is below the national average (20.6%). Twenty point five percent of Massachusetts youth smoke, which is lower than the national average (23%). Governor Romney signed a comprehensive smoke free workplace law in June, 2004.

Although cigarette smoking has declined in Massachusetts and in the US, tobacco use remains the number one preventable cause of death and disease in the Commonwealth and in the world. More than 900,000 Massachusetts residents still smoke, and more than three of four say they want to quit. More than 9,000 Massachusetts children and adults die each year from the affects of tobacco use.

The recent Health Care Reform Act provides MassHealth subscribers with free nicotine replacement therapy (patch, gum, lozenge, etc) and face to face or telephone counseling. Nearly forty percent of MassHealth subscribers are smokers. The Commonwealth also provides free telephone help for all smokers at 1-800-TrytoStop, and a web site at www.TrytoStop.org.

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