Reduce Tobacco Use: Save Lives and Dollars

Tobacco remains the No. 1 preventable cause of death and disease in Oregon, and is responsible for over 7,000 deaths per year.

The most effective way to reduce tobacco use, especially among kids, is to limit access. And the best way to limit access is to raise the price of tobacco.

When tobacco products cost more, fewer people use tobacco, fewer kids start using and more people quit.

Oregon’s current tax on a pack of cigarettes is $1.32. Nationally, the average state tax on a pack of cigarettes is $1.69. Oregon’s cigarette tax ranks 31st among all states.

An 85¢ increase in the price of a pack of cigarettes:
- Decreases youth smoking by 10%
- Results in 500 fewer Oregon 8th and 11th grade smokers each year
- Decreases adult smoking by 7%
- Results in 12,000 fewer Oregon Health Plan (OHP) members who smoke, saving $22,000,000 in direct medical costs each year

Populations targeted by tobacco companies

Addiction to tobacco starts during childhood—90 percent of current adult smokers started smoking before they turned 18. Every year, 1,800 Oregon youth start smoking, and one third of them will die from a tobacco-related illness.

In 2015, the smoking rate among OHP adult members was 31%, which is nearly twice that of the general population. The cost of tobacco-related illnesses among Oregon’s OHP population in 2010 was $374 million, or 9% of OHP expenditures.

Cigarette smoking among Oregon adults by selected groups and race and ethnicity

Lower-income Oregonians, certain racial and ethnic groups, the LGBT population, and those with a mental illness use tobacco at higher rates and suffer the harshest consequences. Raising the price of tobacco will help these vulnerable populations the most, especially when funds are dedicated to prevention.