

New York State Department of Health Announces Decline in Adult Smoking Rate to All-Time Low

Rate of Adults Smoking Cigarettes Dropped Consecutively Over Past Four Years

While Fewer Adults Smoked Cigarettes in 2020, Disparities Persist Along Income, Education, and Gender Lines

ALBANY, N.Y. (June 3, 2022) – New York State Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett today announced that the adult cigarette smoking rate in New York State achieved a new low of 12 percent in 2020, a rate lower than the U.S. average of 15.5 percent. Among young adults, ages 18 to 24, the smoking rate is even lower, at 5.5 percent. These successes are believed to be due, in part, to the progress made by Department of Health's Tobacco Control Program, which aims to prevent youth tobacco use and promotes tobacco cessation services.

"Our Tobacco Control Program has made tremendous progress at changing norms and getting the word out that smoking is bad for your health," State Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett said. "The program has used evidence-based strategies, created tobacco-free spaces, and produced effective media campaigns that successfully encourage people to quit. New York State is committed to reducing the burden of nicotine addiction. DOH will continue to reach out to the public with powerful messages, work with communities to protect their neighborhoods from tobacco-industry influence, create safe, tobacco- and vape-free spaces, and provide information about getting help to quit smoking."

Despite these milestones described in the new report on adult smoking, and available on the New York Department of Health [website](#), tobacco use remains a significant public health problem, with diseases caused by smoking and secondhand smoke killing more than 22,000 people each year in New York State. Another 650,000 adults live with a chronic disease caused by smoking.

Extensive disparities among people who still smoke and who use tobacco remain as well, with tobacco use disproportionately affecting communities targeted by the tobacco industry, which spends billions of dollars in the U.S. every year marketing its deadly products. In New York State, smoking rates are highest among adults who are enrolled in Medicaid, who are unemployed, have lower income, who report frequent mental distress, have less than a high school education, or who live with a disability.

Adults of any age who currently smoke or who are former smokers, as well as those living with certain underlying medical conditions that are often caused by smoking, such as cancer and COPD, are also at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

And while approximately 1.7 million New York adults still smoke cigarettes, many youth and adults use other tobacco products, including, cigars, smokeless tobacco, and electronic cigarettes. Despite downward trends in cigarette use New York youth and young adults remain the primary users of e-cigarettes and vape pens. According to Department data, gathered prior to recent changes in law raising the legal age to purchase such products, nearly 40 percent of 12th grade students and 27 percent of all high school students in New York State had used e-cigarettes. For more information about e-cigarettes or to get help quitting, visit:

https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/tobacco_control/campaign/e-cigarettes/.

Assistance from a medical or mental health care provider is proven to help people quit smoking for good. Treatment, including counseling and quit-smoking medications approved by U.S. Food and Drug Administration

(FDA), is covered by many healthcare plans, including Medicaid and Medicare. For information, talk to your provider, or contact the New York State Smokers' Quitline to learn more.

The free and confidential New York State Smokers' Quitline assists thousands of New Yorkers every year in their attempts to break free from smoking and other tobacco use by providing information, expert quit coaching, support, and free starter kits of nicotine replacement therapy. Call 1-866-NYQUITS (1-866-697-8487), text 716-309-4688, or visit the New York State Smokers' Quitline at <https://www.nysmokefree.com/> for more information or to chat with a Quit Coach.

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