

Smoking more dangerous than previously thought

By Denise Grady, New York Times

However bad you thought smoking was, it's even worse.

A new study adds at least five diseases and 60,000 deaths a year to the toll taken by tobacco in the United States. Before the study, smoking was already blamed for nearly half a million deaths a year in this country from 21 diseases, including 12 types of cancer.

The new findings are based on health data from nearly a million people who were followed for 10 years. In addition to the well-known hazards of lung cancer, artery disease, heart attacks, chronic lung disease and stroke, the researchers found that smoking was linked to significantly increased risks of infection, kidney disease, intestinal disease caused by inadequate blood flow, and heart and lung ailments not previously attributed to tobacco.

Even though people are already barraged with messages about the dangers of smoking, researchers say it is important to let the public know that there is yet more bad news.

"The smoking epidemic is still ongoing, and there is a need to evaluate how smoking is hurting us as a society, to support clinicians and policy making in public health," said Brian D. Carter, an epidemiologist at the American Cancer Society and the first author of an article about the study, which appears in the New England Journal of Medicine. "It's not a done story."

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