

# Press release: Four in 10 smokers incorrectly think nicotine causes cancer

Over 58% of smokers still try to quit without using an aid and going 'cold turkey' despite this being the least effective way. A Public Health England (PHE) report highlights that public misunderstanding of the harmfulness of nicotine containing products, such as nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and e-cigarettes, may be linked to inaccurate and confused perception of the risks of nicotine.

The risks of nicotine use are likely to be very low or negligible. NRT is safe and licenced for use in pregnancy and for people with cardiovascular disease. And there is now wide international consensus that e-cigarettes are far less harmful than smoking. It is the cocktail of deadly chemicals in cigarette smoke, including tar and carbon monoxide, which causes almost all of the harm of smoking.

Four in 10 smokers and ex-smokers incorrectly think that nicotine in cigarettes is the cause of most of the smoking-related cancer. Understanding of the harms of nicotine among the general population is similarly poor. In 2017:

- only 7.5% thought that none or a very small part of the risk of smoking comes from nicotine
- 14% thought that it was nearly all the risk
- almost a quarter (24.2%) of the population didn't know

The use of quit aids can greatly increase your chances of quitting successfully. Research shows that:

- using NRT as a quit aid, such as patches and gums, or e-cigarettes makes it one and a half times as likely you'll succeed
- your chances of quitting are doubled if using a stop smoking medicine prescribed by a GP, pharmacist or other health professional
- expert support from a local stop smoking service gives you the best chance of quitting successfully
- combining quit aids with expert support makes it four times as likely you'll stop smoking successfully

Professor John Newton, Director of Health Improvement at PHE said:

Misunderstanding about the risks from nicotine may be deterring smokers from using quit aids such as e-cigarettes or nicotine replacement therapies like patches and gums.

Nicotine is addictive but it's the many thousands of chemicals in tobacco smoke that are responsible for almost all of the harm

caused by smoking. Using nicotine quit aids helps manage cravings and can be one of the solutions to helping you stop for good. Going 'cold turkey' is not recommended as it's the least successful way.

To get the most benefit, make sure you use as much nicotine replacement as you need, and for as long as you need, as this will help you stop smoking and stay smokefree. Combining quit aids with support from a stop smoking service gives the best success rates. With the wide range of aids now available, there's never been a better time to stop.

PHE has been supporting all NHS trusts across the country to do all they can to become truly smokefree. The government and NHS England have both made commitments to a smokefree NHS, in the latest tobacco control plan and the NHS five year forward view.

Professor Newton comments:

For a truly smokefree NHS to become a reality, our emphasis is to support hospitals shift their efforts away from simply 'enforcing' no smoking towards offering on-going support to help smokers stop for good, including encouraging them to use quit aids.

Smoking rates are at their lowest ever level (15.5% of the adult population), but there are still nearly 7 million smokers in England. Smoking kills 79,000 people in England every year and for every death another 20 smokers are suffering from a smoking-related disease.

For further information or interview bids contact:

## **NHS Smokefree**

Visit the [NHS Smokefree](#) site for support and advice on quitting smoking.

## **PHE's e-cigarette evidence review**

Read the annual update of [PHE's e-cigarette evidence review](#) by leading independent tobacco experts.

## **Smoking prevalence figures**

In 2016, 15.5% of adults aged 18 and over in England currently smoke, down from 19.9% in 2010. In 2000, 26.8% of adults aged 16 and over were smokers. Prevalence since 2010 has fallen most in younger age groups according to [Statistics on Smoking, England 2017](#).

## **PHE's Tobacco Control Profiles**

For local smoking prevalence figures and additional local data see [Local](#)

[Tobacco Control Profiles](#).

## **Costs of smoking**

The total cost from smoking to society in England is approximately £14.7 billion a year. This includes the cost to the NHS of treating diseases caused by smoking which is approximately £2.5 billion a year.

Source: ASH: The Local Cost of Tobacco – [ASH Ready Reckoner](#) and Towards a Smokefree Generation: A Tobacco Control Plan for England.

## **Tobacco Control Plan for England**

The government's new Tobacco Control Plan sets a series of challenging ambitions:

- reduce adult smoking rates from 15.5% to 12% or less
- reduce the prevalence of 15 year olds who regularly smoke from 8% to 3% or less
- reduce the prevalence of smoking in pregnancy from 10.7% to 6% or less

## **Public Health England**

[Public Health England](#) exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. We do this through world-leading science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and providing specialist public health services. We are an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care, and a distinct organisation with operational autonomy. We provide government, local government, the NHS, Parliament, industry and the public with evidence-based professional, scientific expertise and support. Follow us on Twitter: [@PHE\\_uk](#) and Facebook: [www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland](http://www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland).

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## **[Press release: PM to meet ministers from devolved nations at Joint Ministerial Committee](#)**

The First Ministers of Scotland and Wales, along with representatives from the Northern Ireland Civil Service, will come to Downing Street for an update on the negotiations and to discuss recent progress on Clause 11 of the EU Withdrawal Bill, which would see the vast majority of returning devolved powers directly transferred to Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast. Domestic issues and the importance of Northern Ireland's continued involvement in the process, in the absence of an Executive, will also be discussed.

The Prime Minister will make clear her absolute commitment to devolution, strengthening the Union and delivering legal certainty for businesses and consumers across the UK as we forge a new, deep and special partnership with the EU.

She will also confirm the government's intention for the devolved nations to not only maintain their existing powers once we leave the EU but also gain significant new decision-making abilities, including across issues such as water quality and energy efficiency.

The devolved administrations will also be given an update on the latest on the investigation into the incident in Salisbury.

Speaking ahead of the meeting, the Prime Minister Theresa May said:

At this important meeting with the devolved administrations today, I will be making clear my commitment to a deal that brings our country together, protects the security and prosperity of all our communities and business sectors, and reinforces our Union of nations.

We will discuss the EU negotiations and EU Withdrawal Bill and how the UK Government has tabled an amendment that will ensure the vast majority of powers returning from the EU that cross over with devolved competencies will transfer directly to Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast.

I am determined to secure a settlement that delivers an unprecedented democratic dividend for the people of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, while protecting and preserving the precious Union that is at the heart of our past, present and future success.

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## **Press release: Foreign Secretary calls for a united response**

While we await an explanation from Russia of how a military-grade nerve agent of a type developed by Russia came to be used in the UK, the Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has today been calling his counterparts and leaders of international organisations to set out what we know and our concerns that, if as we suspect is highly likely the Russian state was responsible, this would be further reckless behaviour which threatens the international community and requires an international response.

The Foreign Secretary has emphasised that if this was a direct act by the

Russian state then it would not simply be a threat to the UK, but a clear violation of the chemical weapons convention, a breach of international law and a threat to those who abide by the rules-based international order as a whole.

The French Foreign Minister Le Drian offered France's total solidarity for an unacceptable act, and noted that President Macron had promised to stand by the UK as it prepares to take concrete measures against Russia's breach of international order. The French government stressed particular concerns about Russia's use of chemical weapons elsewhere, as is evident with their support to Asad's murderous regime in Syria.

In speaking to the German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, the Foreign Secretary emphasised how countering Russian disinformation, halting Russia's adventurism in the western Balkans and reducing Russia's ongoing involvement in Ukraine's humanitarian crisis were issues of paramount importance to Germany and the UK alike.

Speaking to the NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, the Foreign Secretary reiterated the importance of NATO standing together to counter the threat Russia poses not just to the UK, but to our NATO allies also. He was pleased that the NATO Secretary General expressed his support and solidarity, and agreed that NATO unity was paramount, as it was to counter other existing threats to NATO partners, including in eastern Europe where UK troops are stationed alongside troops from various Allies. They both agreed that Russian actions repeatedly threaten the security of NATO partners – from the Baltics, Balkans, Ukraine and Georgia – and NATO must stand as an alliance to call out Putin's behaviour. The UK will brief the North Atlantic Council at tomorrow's session.

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## **Press release: Attempted attack on Palestinian Prime Minister: Statement**

I am shocked to hear of the attack on Palestinian Prime Minister Hamdallah's convoy in Gaza this morning. I strongly condemn this attack, for which there is no justification. My thoughts are with those who were injured, and I wish them a speedy recovery.

The UK continues to support the return of the legitimate Palestinian Authority to the Gaza Strip, and we encourage those involved to engage constructively towards this objective. We urge non-violence, dialogue and progress towards a sustainable reconciliation and an improvement in the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

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## Press release: PM call with Chancellor Merkel: 13 March 2018

The Prime Minister spoke to Chancellor Merkel earlier this afternoon to update her on the ongoing investigation into the Salisbury incident.

The Prime Minister set out the conclusion reached by the UK Government that it was highly likely that Russia was responsible for the attack against Sergei and Yulia Skripal.

They discussed the pattern of aggressive Russian behaviour and agreed it would be important to act in unison with allies to counter it.

Chancellor Merkel condemned the attack and said she stood in full solidarity with the UK.

They agreed that the international community should coordinate closely as the investigation developed and in the wake of Russia's response.