



Position Statement

Tobacco use and health

ICN Position:

The tobacco epidemic is a significant and serious cause of chronic and preventable disease and death and poses a major public health threat. Despite this, measures to control its use remain inadequate.

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is committed to policies and actions that aim to:

- Ban tobacco use in all public places, schools and workplaces.
- Prevent and eliminate tobacco use by nurses and nursing students.
- Encourage national nurses associations (NNAs) to adopt a smoke free policy within their premises, meetings and other events.
- Develop partnerships with other international governmental and non-governmental organisations, and health professions' organisations to protect people from second hand smoke.
- Support NNAs and nurses to offer help in tobacco cessation.
- Continue to advocate for full implementation of the WHO Framework convention on Tobacco Control.
- Support implementation of tobacco cessation programmes for tobacco-free workplaces.

ICN encourages member associations to co-ordinate their efforts with other national groups to bring government and public attention to the harmful health effects of tobacco and to encourage governments to reduce, discourage and eliminate tobacco use, including providing access to cessation programmes. More specifically, ICN advocates the following national actions:

- Lobbying for policies that ban tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, and that support prominent warnings on all tobacco products.
- Working with governments to introduce legislative and fiscal measures, such as higher taxes on tobacco products.
- Supporting a smoking ban in public places, and creating smoke free schools, sports, workplaces, air travel, restaurants, and other public spaces.
- Participating in public education/information campaigns, particularly targeting vulnerable groups such as youth.
- Providing incentives to tobacco farmers to switch to other crops.
- Encouraging nurses to become smoke free role models and offering cessation programmes to nurses who use tobacco.
- Encouraging nurses to integrate tobacco use prevention and cessation and avoidance of secondhand smoke as part of their regular nursing practice.
- Working to integrate tobacco and smoking information into all levels of nursing curricula.

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- Identifying actions to support hospitalised patients and those who attend or are in care institutions who normally use tobacco and are confined in a non-smoking environment
- Offering training in cessation and tobacco control programmes.
- Ensuring that there is no collaboration with or funding from tobacco companies.

Background

Global tobacco use has increased steadily, and the cost in preventable deaths approaches 5.4 million people a year from lung cancer, heart disease and other illness with 80% of the deaths occurring in developing countries. Unless action is taken, it is expected to rise to 8 million by the year 2030. Cost-effective interventions such as banning tobacco use in public places, warning people about the dangers of tobacco use, raising taxes on tobacco and offering help to quit tobacco use exist to fight the tobacco epidemic¹.

The ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses² affirms that health promotion and illness prevention are among the fundamental responsibilities of the nurse. Additionally the nurse shares with other citizens the responsibility for initiating and supporting action to meet the health and social needs of the public.

Health problems caused by tobacco use are highly preventable. Health promotion and disease prevention policies and interventions related to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control³ must be strengthened and nurses are well suited for its implementation. As well, nurses and NNAs should be involved in tobacco-related research and in its dissemination.

Adopted in 1999

Reviewed and revised in 2006 and in 2012

Previously: *Smoking and Health*

Related ICN Positions:

- [Reducing environmental and lifestyle-related health hazards](#)
- [Occupational Health and Safety for Nurses](#)
- [Nurses Role in the Prevention and Early Detection of Cancer](#)

The International Council of Nurses is a federation of more than 130 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality nursing care for all and sound health policies globally.

¹ . WHO(2008), WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic, 2008, The MPOWER package. Geneva: WHO.

² International Council of Nurses (ICN), Code of Ethics for Nurses, revised 2006.

³ . <http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2003/9241591013.pdf>.