

In South Africa in 2016 there were almost 26,000 smoking-attributable deaths for smokers aged 35-75 years (Boachie et al., 2021).

The tobacco industry is promoting e-cigarettes as a “healthier” alternative, but there are long-term negative health impacts.

Diseases and Deaths

Smoking harms nearly all systems in the human body and causes many diseases, including lung cancer, which is the leading cause of cancer deaths in South Africa (Koegelenberg et al., 2019).

Tobacco smoking caused an estimated 42,100 deaths in 2016 in South Africa (Tobacco Atlas, 2022).

Deaths were predominantly caused by respiratory problems, heart disease, issues related to blood pressure, and cancers (Boachie et al., 2021).

Treatment Costs

Tobacco-related illnesses cost the South African economy R42 billion in 2016.

The tobacco industry only paid R12 billion in excise taxes in the same year (Boachie et al., 2021)

This means the economy lost R3.43 for every R1 the government raised from tobacco tax.

Agriculture: Green Tobacco Sickness

Green tobacco sickness (GTS) occurs when nicotine is absorbed through the skin as farm workers harvest tobacco.

Myth: Smoking gives you protection from GTS.

Fact: Smoking provides no protection from GTS (Shmitt et al., 2007).

Myth: Working with tobacco for some time allows you to develop a tolerance for GTS.

Fact: There is no evidence you can build up a tolerance to Green Tobacco Sickness.

Second-hand Smoke

Exposure to second-hand smoke is responsible for more than 880,000 deaths worldwide every year (Yousuf et al., 2020).

Adults’ exposure to second-hand smoke has immediate adverse effects on the cardiovascular system and can cause coronary heart disease and lung cancer (CDC, 2010).

Infants and children are more at risk from the effects of second-hand smoke than adults (CDC, 2006).

Myth: A small amount of exposure to second-hand smoke is harmless.

Fact: There is no risk-free level of exposure to second-hand smoke (CDC, 2006).

Myth: Smoking out of a window or near an extractor fan will protect others in the room from second-hand smoke.

Fact: Smoke from one cigarette can linger in a room for up to two and a half hours, even with a window open (ASH, 2017).

Myth: If an inside space is ventilated after smokers have used it, there will be no health risks.

Fact: Residue from tobacco smoke can linger on surfaces, furniture, floors, and walls for several months (ASH, 2017).

E-cigarettes

E-cigarettes pose health risks both to the users and any non-users who are exposed to the second-hand aerosols (Dinaker, 2016).

Risks Include (Feeney et al., 2020):

- Nicotine addiction
- Burns and injury
- Exposure to toxicants and carcinogens
- Cardiovascular risk
- Lung injury
- Severe COVID-related illnesses