

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death and disease in the state. Approximately 21% of Michigan adults currently smoke cigarettes.
- In Washtenaw County, 15% of adults smoke cigarettes, up from 12% in 2010. This is the first time the smoking rate has increased since we began collecting data through the Health Improvement Plan survey in 1995.

Smoking in Washtenaw County

Each year, 16,200 Michigan residents die prematurely due to tobacco use. Although tobacco use has declined over the past several decades, it still remains a major public health concern. Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death and disease in Michigan and is linked to heart disease, cancer, stroke and COPD - the four leading causes of death in the state.

Through the Health Improvement Plan (HIP) collaborative, Washtenaw County Public Health surveys residents every five years on a variety of health issues. The most recent data show stark disparities in smoking rates among certain groups. Nearly 40% of adults with Medicaid or the Healthy Michigan Plan identify as current smokers, compared with only 12% who have commercial insurance. Additionally, 26% of black residents smoke, compared to 14% white and 6% Asian. Geographic area of residence also yielded differences, with 21% of Ypsilanti residents smoking, compared to 12% Ann Arbor.

In addition, usage of electronic smoking devices was slightly higher than the national average in Washtenaw County. More than 4% of Washtenaw County adults said they had used an electronic smoking device, while the nationwide rate was about 3.7%. Nearly 80% of people using electronic smoking devices reported using traditional cigarettes as well.

Quitting is difficult. Most tobacco users make several quit attempts before they are successful. Research shows quitters are most successful when using a combination of therapies, such as nicotine replacement, counseling, self-help materials and a strong support network of family and friends.

Washtenaw County Public Health is working with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to connect current smokers to quitting support and resources. The Michigan Tobacco Quitline (1-800-QUIT NOW or 800-784-8669 or Michigan.quitlogix.org) helps current smokers access quit aids, counseling and other resources. Support is available 24/7 in multiple languages. Qualified enrollees can also receive eight weeks of free medication (nicotine patch, gum or lozenge). In addition, pregnant women can receive cash incentives.

What is WCPH doing to address this issue?

For many years, Washtenaw County Public Health has received funding to target populations to promote smoking cessation, and to work on smoke-free environments policy changes. We have been an integral and strategic partner with local and state initiatives. Major accomplishments include adoption of the Washtenaw County Clean Indoor Air Regulation, as well as the amendment to include electronic smoking devices; passage of the Michigan Smoke-free Law; establishment of the Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor Housing Commission Smoke-free Policies; and institution of the Dexter Tobacco-Free Parks Ordinance.

This fiscal year, we have received \$30,000 from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to promote the Michigan Tobacco Quitline, particularly among low-income individuals and pregnant women. We are also working to educate our community partners on the importance of screening for tobacco use, encouraging smokers to quit and recommending use of the Michigan Tobacco Quitline. In addition, we are educating legislators on policies that promote smoking prevention and cessation as well as the need for funding to support these efforts.

For more information:

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