



Warning Label Fact Sheet

MINIMAL CLINICAL INTERVENTIONS

- Since the release of the first Surgeon General's report on smoking and health in the United States in 1964, about 10 million people have died from smoking-related diseases in the United States — heart disease, lung cancer, emphysema, and other respiratory diseases.¹
- If current smoking patterns continue, an estimated 25 million Americans will die prematurely from a smoking-related illness, including an estimated 5 million people who are now children and adolescents under the age of 18 years.¹
- The Federal Cigarette Labeling and Advertising Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-92) required that the warning "Caution: Cigarette Smoking May Be Hazardous to Your Health" be placed in small print on one of the side panels of each cigarette package. The act prohibited additional labeling requirements at the federal, state, or local levels.²
- In June 1967 the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) issued its first report to Congress recommending that the warning label be changed to "Warning: Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Health and May Cause Death from Cancer and Other Diseases."²
- In 1969 Congress passed the Public Health Cigarette Smoking Act (Public Law 91-222), which prohibited cigarette advertising on television and radio and required that each cigarette package contain the label "Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health."²
- In 1981 the FTC issued a report to Congress that concluded health warning labels had little effect on public knowledge and attitudes about smoking. As a result of this report, Congress enacted the Comprehensive Smoking Education Act of 1984 (Public Law 98-474), which required four specific health warnings on all cigarette packages and advertisements:
 - SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking Causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, Emphysema, and May Complicate Pregnancy.
 - SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Quitting Smoking Now Greatly Reduces Serious Risks to Your Health.
 - SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking by Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal Injury, Premature Birth, and Low Birth Weight.
 - SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigarette Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.²
- By the mid-1980s scientific evidence revealed that smokeless tobacco use causes oral cancer, nicotine addiction, and other health problems. The Comprehensive Smokeless Tobacco Health Education Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-252) required three rotating warning labels on smokeless tobacco packaging and advertisements:
 - WARNING: This product may cause mouth cancer.
 - WARNING: This product may cause gum disease and tooth loss.
 - WARNING: This product is not a safe alternative to cigarettes.^{2,4}
- Warning labels that appear on smokeless tobacco products in the United States are weaker, less informative, and less obvious labels used on the products than they are in some countries. The FTC is reviewing public comments on the effectiveness of the existing warning labels.³
- Warning labels on cigarette packages in the United States are weaker and less prominent than those of many other countries.²
- The Australian warning method uses six rotating messages covering 25% of the front of the cigarette package. One side panel is entirely given to the labeling of dangerous constituents. The government also requires that 33% of the back panel include the same message and an elaboration of that message.²
- The Canadian government soon will require tobacco manufacturers to display health messages and graphics along with information about smoking-related diseases and quit methods on all tobacco product packaging. These messages will occupy 50% of the front and back panels of the cigarette package, and additional information will be included inside. One side of the panel is given to the labeling of dangerous ingredients.⁴

- There is clear scientific evidence that cigar smoking represents a significant health risk and is not a safe alternative to cigarette smoking. Cigar use has been linked to oral, esophageal, laryngeal, and lung cancer. Regular cigar smokers who inhale, particularly those who smoke several cigars per day, have an increased risk for coronary heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.⁵
- On June 26, 2000, the FTC announced a settlement with seven of the largest U.S. cigar companies requiring health warnings on cigar products. Health warnings must appear on the principal display panel to ensure warnings are easily seen. Each of the five required warnings must be displayed an equal number of times. The agreement also calls for warnings to be placed on various types of advertising, such as magazines and other periodicals, point-of-purchase displays, and catalogues.
- Every cigar package and advertisement will require the following warnings on a rotating basis:

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigar Smoking Can Cause Cancers Of The Mouth And Throat, Even If You Do Not Inhale.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigar Smoking Can Cause Lung Cancer And Heart Disease.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Tobacco Use Increases The Risk of Infertility, Stillbirth And Low Birth Weight.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigars Are Not A Safe Alternative To Cigarettes.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Tobacco Smoke Increases The Risk Of Lung Cancer And Heart Disease, Even In Nonsmokers.⁶

REFERENCES

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Smoking-Attributable Mortality and Years of Potential Life Lost—United States, 1984. *MMWR* 1997 46: 444-51.
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Reducing Tobacco Use: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2000.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Federal Trade Commission Request for Comments Concerning Regulations Implementing the Comprehensive Smokeless Tobacco Health Education Act of 1986. (Internet link) http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/federal_register.htm Accessed [March 7, 2000].
4. Health Canada New Cigarette labeling Measures. <http://www.tobaccolaw.org/Documents>.
5. National Cancer Institute. Cigars Health Effects and Trends. Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph No. 9. Bethesda (MD): U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute. NIH Publication No. 98-4302, 1998.
6. Federal Trade Commission. FTC Announces Settlements Requiring Disclosure of Cigar Health Risks: Landmark Agreements Require Strong Warnings on Both Packaging and Advertisements. (press release). June 26, 2000.