

## Smoking is not cool

### SMOKING A SINGLE CIGARETTE CAN DECREASE YOUR LIFE EXPECTANCY BY 20 MINUTES. HOW MUCH OF YOUR LIFE DO YOU WANT TO CUT SHORT? THE CHOICE IS YOURS

Muscat Daily · 18 Feb 2025 · 15 · (Courtesy: clevelandclinic.org)

Smoking just one cigarette can decrease your life expectancy by an estimated 20 minutes, according to a new study. Researchers from University College London (UCL) in the UK analysed follow-up data from the British Doctors Study and data from the Million Women Study for their analysis.

They found that the life expectancy loss was higher for women with roughly 22 minutes lost compared to men who lost roughly 17 minutes of their life expectancy per cigarette

smoked. They published their findings in the journal *Addiction*.

The new estimate was nearly twice as high as a 2000 estimate published in the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)* which found that a single cigarette shortened a person's life by 11 minutes on average. This, however, was based only on data about male individuals.

"This is quite significant, insofar as the old estimate was based on incomplete data from the British Doctors Study, which had not concluded at the time of the previous estimate," Lion Shahab, a professor of health psychology at UCL who didn't take part in the study, told *Euronews Health*.

"Then, the thought was that the average smoker lost 6.5 years of life compared with a non-smoker. Since the end of the study, this estimate was increased to 10 years of life (for men) and based on the Million Woman study to 11 years for women," he said.

"The impact of smoking on shortening life expectancy nearly doubled, which is reflected in the new estimate," he added.

#### Variations among individuals

The study authors point out that the estimate comes with caveats due to variations between individuals.

"To make an estimate like this you have to make a lot of assumptions. The authors have been clear about this and report these as limitations," said Jamie HartmannBoyce, an assistant professor of Health Policy and Management at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in the US who was not involved in the study.

Shahab added, that "risks from smoking accumulate across the lifespan, and this risk does not increase linearly but exponentially," meaning that "the impact of a single cigarette smoked after age 45 is likely much higher," on life expectancy compared to one smoked at age 20.

#### Preventable cause of death

Tobacco ranks as the 'most preventable cause of illness and death in the world', according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

It has been linked to 7.2 million deaths annually, killing more people than AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined.

Currently, 179 million adults and 4 million adolescents aged between 13 and 15 are smokers in the European region, according to WHO estimates.

On strategies to quit smoking, "evidence shows people's chances are best when they receive a combination of behavioural support – like counselling from a stop smoking specialist – with a stop smoking medication like varenicline, a nicotine patch plus a short-acting form of nicotine replacement like gum, or regulated nicotine-containing e-cigarettes," HartmannBoyce said.