

Costs to Smokers

Smokers spend great sums of money on a product that damages their health and financial security. These resources could be used to cover basic human needs, such as food, shelter, clothing, health care, and education. In poverty-stricken communities where food costs represent a significant portion of household budgets, expenditures on tobacco may make the difference between an adequate diet and malnutrition for the smoker's family.

Smokers and their families are exposed to severe economic losses when they become disabled or die from tobacco-related diseases. Because one-quarter of smokers die and many more become ill during their most productive years, the loss of income is substantial. In addition, family members often invest time and scarce resources to care for sick and dying smoking relatives. In many low-resource countries, hospital treatment can absorb a family's life savings, and a visit to the hospital may involve days of travel and burdensome expenses.

Smokers expose their homes and workplaces to unnecessary fire hazards, and they often pay higher premiums for health and property insurance. The largest opportunity costs of smoking exist in countries that can least afford it, exacerbating global disparities in income and health.

