



Helpline for tobacco users

Posted at: 25/09/2018

Highlights

- **India** has become the **first and only SAARC country** to have a quit-line number on tobacco products.
- The Union Health Ministry has already made 85% pictorial health warning mandatory on both sides of the packets of cigarettes, bidis, and chewing tobacco.
- For smoking and smokeless forms of tobacco products, the warnings 'Tobacco causes cancer' and 'Tobacco causes painful death' shall appear in white font on a red background and the label 'Quit today call — 1800-11-2356' shall appear in white font on a black background.
- India is the 4th country in Asia after Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore to have this government helpline for those looking to quit tobacco.
- At least 46 countries have quit-line numbers as part of health warning labels.
- India ranks third in the world for package warnings, according to the October 2016 'Cigarette Package Health Warning International Status Report' of the Canadian Cancer Society that ranked 205 countries.
- The current pictorial warnings on both sides of packages of cigarettes, bidis and chewing tobacco products in India came into effect in April 2016 on the direction of the Rajasthan High Court and subsequently the Supreme Court.
- The quit-line number will be printed on all tobacco products manufactured after September 1, 2018.

Pictorial warnings

- The Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) 2016-17 by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had put to rest all apprehensions about the effectiveness of warnings, since 62% of cigarette smokers and 54% of bidi smokers shared that they thought of quitting because of the 85% pictorial warnings on the packets.
- And 46% of smokeless tobacco users thought of quitting because of the warnings on smokeless tobacco products.
- "Pictorial health warnings on tobacco products are the most cost-effective tool for educating people on health risks of tobacco use.
- In a country like India where people use several languages and dialects, pictorial warning transcends language and, in many cases, the illiteracy barrier.
- The 85% pictorial warnings on all cigarettes, bidis and chewing tobacco packages manufactured and sold in India have resulted in 92% of adults surveyed under GATS 2016-2017 believing that smoking caused serious illness, and 96% saying that use of smokeless tobacco causes serious illness.
- The findings revealed a growing demand for cessation centres as 55% of smokers and 50% of smokeless tobacco users were planning or thinking of quitting tobacco use.



SAHAYA IAS
www.sahayaias.com