Warn about the dangers of tobacco
One of six cost-effective actions endorsed by WHO to reduce tobacco’s deadly toll

Tobacco is a deadly, addictive product. The extreme addictiveness of tobacco and the full range of health dangers are not fully understood or appreciated by the public.

WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)

Article 11 of the FCTC requires parties to use large, clear health warnings that should cover 50 percent of the principle display areas. The article also requires parties to implement effective measures to ensure that tobacco product packaging and labeling do not promote a tobacco product by any means that are false, misleading, deceptive, or likely to create an erroneous impression about its characteristic, health effects, hazards, or emissions. These include terms such as “light,” “low tar,” and “ultra-light.”

KEY MESSAGES

- Tobacco is deadly and addictive.
- To ensure that the public is fully informed of tobacco’s harms and to counter the seductive images of tobacco portrayed by the tobacco industry, it is essential to:
  - Place health warnings on all tobacco product packaging. Tobacco pack warnings should be clear, include graphic pictures of tobacco’s harms and cover at least half of all outer product covering.
  - Launch tobacco control media campaigns and other counter advertising activities. Media campaigns must be hard hitting, sustained over significant amounts of time and effectively counter the tobacco industry’s marketing and promotional tactics.
  - Terms such as “light” and “low” are misleading and deceptive. Such products do not reduce risk.

The case for warning about the dangers of tobacco

- In Brazil, after the introduction of new picture warnings, 73% of smokers approved of them, 54% had changed their opinion on the health consequences of smoking and 67% said the new warnings made them want to quit.1
- Pack-a-day smokers are potentially exposed to the warnings over 7,000 times per year.2
- Pictorial warnings are overwhelmingly supported by the public.4
- Hard hitting, intensive media campaigns using graphic images inform the public, reduce tobacco use, and increase quit attempts and cessation rates.5-8

“Every person should be informed of the health consequences, addictive nature and mortal threat posed by tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke.” WHO FCTC Article 4.1

3. Ibid.