

# Too cool to smoke: World No Tobacco Day, 31 May

Today, Thursday 31 May, is [World No Tobacco Day](#), a World Health Organisation (WHO) day dedicated to highlighting why tobacco is harmful to your body, and why quitting is life-saving. Roche's cancer education platform, Be Cancer Aware, is inviting all smokers in South Africa to quit for the day. You can help promote the campaign and show that you're "too cool to smoke" by wearing your shades to work on the day.



(Image: Yale)

"World No Tobacco day is celebrated by WHO and other health organisations around the globe. Roche supports such initiatives and hope to raise awareness amongst tobacco users and their friends about the dangers of smoking and second-hand smoke. Smoking can increase your chances of contracting lung and heart problems, as well as cancer," says Dr Cindy Aitton, Head of Medical Affairs at Roche.

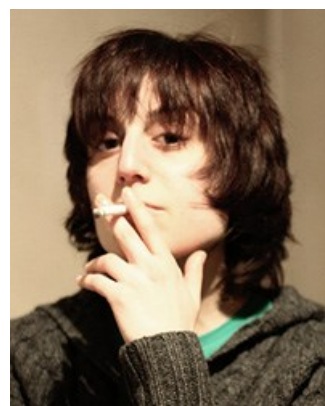
## Harming the heart, the lungs and the body

Smoking or chewing tobacco, and using snuff, can lead to diseases affecting the heart and lungs, with smoking being a major risk factor for heart attacks, strokes, emphysema and cancer. The most common cause of lung cancer is cigarette smoking, which is associated with at least 80% of all diagnoses.<sup>1</sup> This is according to the WHO World Cancer Report. According to another report, this one published by the American Cancer Society, lung cancer is the second most common cause of cancer death in Southern Africa.<sup>2</sup> It is an extremely difficult illness to treat because most of the symptoms are not visible until the disease has progressed to an advanced stage. This means that by the time the cancer is found, it is usually too late to treat effectively, and many of these cancer patients die.

Non-smokers are also at risk due to the cancer-causing chemicals in the second-hand smoke from the tobacco.<sup>3</sup>

## Awareness is key

Dr Greg Hart, a Cape Town-based oncologist with a special interest in lung cancer, says: "Smoking or tobacco use is the single-most preventable cause of death in the world. We also know that smoking is one of the most common risk factors for lung cancer. Harmful substances in smoke can damage lung cells and that is why smoking cigarettes, pipes or cigars can cause lung cancer. This is also why second-hand smoke can cause lung cancer in non-smokers. Smoking causes other cancers as well, such as cancers of the throat, mouth and oesophagus."



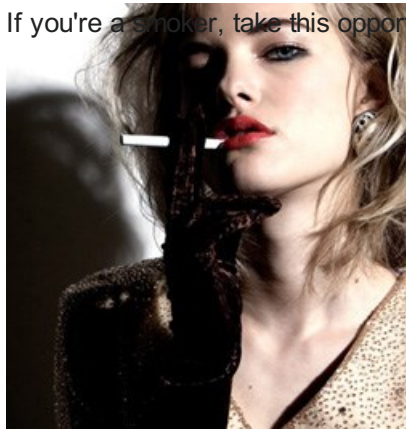
## You can beat this

The aim of this initiative is to create awareness about tobacco addiction and the detrimental effect it has on the body.

Research has shown that tobacco kills 44 400 South Africans every year<sup>4</sup>, 10% of which die from second-hand smoke. Smoking and tobacco smoke "may cause, or aggravates just about every form of cancer and many other diseases.

"There's no safe level of smoking or exposure to second-hand smoke. This is why governments have made the decision to prohibit smoking in public areas," Dr. Aitton continues.

If you are a smoker or tobacco user and would like to quit, contact the National Council Against Smoking or the Cancer Association of South Africa. Find more information on the Be Cancer Aware website ([www.becanceraware.co.za](http://www.becanceraware.co.za)) and Facebook page.



(Image: Kelly Hau from New York, via Wikimedia Commons)

If you're a smoker, take this opportunity to kick the habit on 31 May World No Tobacco Day and notice the changes in your health, and the people around you. Both smokers and non-smokers can show their support by wearing a pair of sunglasses to work, or dressing in something "cool" and fun during the day.

## About BCA

Be Cancer Aware is Roche's cancer education platform for those newly diagnosed with cancer. Together with resources such as a website, newsletter, and social media, Be Cancer Aware hopes to educate, support and encourage patients with appropriate information and resources. Here you'll find information including expert opinions, inspirational stories from patients and survivors and the latest news of local cancer activities.

- Be Cancer Aware aims to offer quality cancer awareness and educational information to South Africans.
- Awareness of cancer is vital in the fight to reduce the burden of the disease and improve the lives of patients.
- BCA is supported by Roche Products (Pty) Ltd in the interest of cancer education and awareness.

## About World No Tobacco Day

On 31st May each year, WHO celebrates World No Tobacco Day, highlighting the health risks associated with tobacco use and advocating for effective policies to reduce consumption.

The World Health Assembly created World No Tobacco Day in 1987 to draw global attention to the tobacco epidemic and its lethal effects. It provides an opportunity to highlight specific tobacco control messages and to promote adherence to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Tobacco use is the number one preventable epidemic that the health community faces.

## References

1. *WHO World Cancer Report 2008*. Edited by Peter Boyle and Bernard Levin. Lung cancer, Chapter 5.10
2. *Garcia M, et al. Global cancer facts & figures 2007*. Atlanta, GA. American Cancer Society, 2007
3. *ibid*
4. Internet, Available at: <http://www.againstsmoking.co.za/american-cancer-society-recognises-the-work-of-dr-saloojee-in-tobacco-control/>

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