

27 May 2018 – This year’s World No Tobacco Day 2018 campaign focuses on tobacco and heart disease. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death and disease in most countries in WHO’s Eastern Mediterranean Region. In 2015, cardiovascular disease claimed nearly 1.4 million lives in the Region. Estimates show that in the next decade, deaths from cardiovascular disease, which in the Eastern Mediterranean Region is mostly linked to ischemic heart disease, will increase more significantly than in any other region of the world except Africa.

Tobacco use is a key risk factor for developing coronary heart disease, stroke and peripheral vascular disease. In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, tobacco use is alarming. Around 38% of men and 4% of women (21% of adults on average) are smokers. In some countries, as many as 52% of men and 22% of women smoke. Smoking among youth is particularly worrying, reaching 42% in boys and 31% in girls. This includes smoking shisha, which is more popular among youth than cigarettes. Smoking is expected to rise by 2025 in WHO’s Eastern Mediterranean Region, contrary to the trend for all other WHO regions. This will lead to an escalating epidemic of cardiovascular disease regionally.

[Read more about World No Tobacco Day 2018](#)

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