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.

Solutions to reduce related death and disease are available. Governments and partners can beat tobacco by raising public awareness to the link between tobacco use and heart disease

and by fully implementing the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, as well as the technical packages that constitute the Global Hearts Initiative, which aims to scale up prevention and control of cardiovascular disease, and include: MPOWER, SHAKE and HEARTS.

On this World No Tobacco Day, governments and partners need to unite to defeat the tobacco epidemic, which kills over 7 million people every year, which translates into more than 19 000 people dying every day from tobacco use or second-hand smoke. Choose health not tobacco because tobacco breaks hearts.

WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

Global Hearts Initiative

MPOWER: technical package to defeat the global tobacco epidemic

SHAKE: technical package for salt reduction

HEARTS: technical package for cardiovascular disease management in primary health care

Sunday 7th of July 2024 06:21:37 AM