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# Carroll County Times

Family Smoking Prevention and Control Act signed by President Obama on June 22, 2009

## Changes designed to reduce smoking

*By Barbara White, Carroll County Health Department*

On June 12, Congress sent a bill to President Barack Obama that will change how cigarettes are manufactured, marketed and sold. The legislation adds a new chapter to the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, establishing and governing the regulation of tobacco products. The new chapter vests the FDA with jurisdiction to regulate both current and new tobacco products and restrict tobacco product marketing. Monday, President Obama signed the bill.

It is predicted that the measure will reduce youth smoking by 11 percent and adult smoking by 2 percent during the next decade. Here are some of the ways the act may contribute to lower tobacco use rates:

- **Bans flavorings like fruit, candy and spices in cigarettes:** A study done by Harvard School of Public Health researchers found that new brands of cigarettes are being marketed to young smokers and racial/ethnic groups using colorful and stylish packaging and exploiting adolescents' attraction to candy flavors.
- **Require larger, more informative health warning labels:** Canada was the first country in the world to adopt mandatory warning images on cigarette packages. The Canadian Tobacco Act requires graphic warnings to be printed on all tobacco products sold legally in Canada. They are required to take up at least 50 percent of the visible surface of all tobacco product packaging. The result, 58 percent of smokers said they thought more about the health effects of smoking because of the warnings, 44 percent said the warnings increased their motivation to quit, and 27 percent said they smoked less inside their homes as a result of picture warnings.
- **Prohibit terms such as "light," "mild" and "low tar" on tobacco product:** Packages and advertisements can mislead customers into believing that these cigarettes cause fewer health problems than other cigarettes.

Cigarettes can claim to be "light" or "low-tar" if they pass a test designed by the Federal Trade Commission. In this test, a machine smokes the cigarettes and measures the levels of "inhaled" tar and nicotine.

- **There's a problem with this approach:** Humans are not smoking machines. According the National Cancer Institute, real smokers tend to compensate when they smoke light cigarettes by taking deeper and more frequent puffs. In the end, they get just as many toxins as they would from a standard cigarette.

There is some evidence to show that smoking these types of cigarettes may actually be linked to rising lung cancer risk. Researchers at the University of California, San Diego says this may explain why they are seeing more adenocarcinoma, a cancer that grows in the air sacs far deeper in the lungs. Smokers once tended to get lung cancer in larger air tubes, particularly a type named squamous cell carcinoma. When an individual smokes a "light" cigarette, they inhale more deeply to get their nicotine jolt, pushing cancer causing smoke deeper into the lungs.

### Information

For more information on the FDA legislation or for help quitting smoking, call the Cigarette Restitution Fund Program at Carroll County Health Department at 410 876-4443.

*Barbara White is the Director of the Cigarette Restitution Fund Program at Carroll County Health Department. If there is a public health topic you would like to see addressed in future articles, write to the Health Department at P.O. Box 845, Westminster, MD 21158-0845.*

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