

Fifty years ago, it was not unusual to see ashtrays at every table in a restaurant and clouds of cigarette smoke upon entering many public facilities. The television was loaded with cigarette commercials. Smoking tobacco was widely accepted and tolerated by most of the U.S. population. Sadly, more than forty two percent of U.S. adults smoked tobacco regularly during that time.

On January 11, 1964, Luther L. Terry, M.D., Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service released the first report of the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on Smoking and Health. The report concluded that cigarette smoking is a cause of lung cancer and laryngeal cancer in men, a probable cause of lung cancer in women and the most important cause of chronic bronchitis. Terry's report also stated that this was a problem that needed to be addressed by the government.

Since the appearance of this report, the U.S. smoking rate has fallen by more than half to about eighteen percent. In 1965, the government began requiring cigarette manufacturers to attach warning labels to packaging. In 1967, the Federal Communications Commission required that television and radio stations provide free air time for anti-smoking public service announcements. Eventually, in 1971, cigarette commercials were banned. Protecting non-smokers from secondhand smoke was also a major concern in the 1970's. Public places such as restaurants or air planes were required to provide no-smoking sections. These new policies paved the way for complete smoking bans in these areas. Despite this huge improvement in smoking rates, there are about forty three million smokers in the U.S. Also, tobacco smoking is still by far the leading cause of PREVENTABLE deaths in this country!

In January 2014, the Surgeon General will release the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Surgeon General's Report on smoking and health. The report will highlight 50 years of progress in tobacco control and prevention, present new data on the health consequences of tobacco use, and detail initiatives that can end the tobacco use epidemic in the United States.

Visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for the upcoming release of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Surgeon General's Report on smoking and health.