

World No Tobacco Day 2015

# Call for international solidarity on tobacco packaging laws

STAR HEALTH DESK

On World No Tobacco Day 2015, The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union) calls on countries to work together to introduce and uphold the tobacco packaging and labelling laws that have proven both to help tobacco users quit and discourage others from trying these highly addictive products.

Tobacco packaging designs have become a controversial flashpoint in the ongoing struggle between the tobacco industry and countries seeking to support public health simply because package design is so effective at influencing consumers' decisions to buy — or not buy — tobacco products.

Evidence shows that effective health warnings — including large and shocking pictures and strong clear language — motivate smokers to quit and discourage non-smokers from starting.

"The graphic element vastly increases a warning's impact and is vital for communicating with young people and in areas with low literacy rates," says Dr Ehsan Latif, Director of the Department of Tobacco Control at The Union. "These warnings work. In Brazil, two-thirds of smokers said they made them want to quit, and, in Singapore, 71% said they now knew more about the health effects of smoking."

During the past year, India, Pakistan and Nepal have introduced laws that



require graphic health warnings to cover 85% of the surface area of tobacco packaging. Nepal's law requires 90% coverage. These countries now face increasing pressure from the tobacco industry to delay and water down this legislation, which are slated to be the strongest in the world.

Anticipating industry backlash to these increasingly effective restrictions, the

global health community announced its commitment to stand in solidarity with these countries, at the 16th World Conference on Tobacco or Health (WCTOH) held in March this year.

The official conference declaration said: "The delegates at WCTOH affirm their support to all countries that have passed or are considering adopting plain packaging or graphic health warnings

covering more than 85% including India, Pakistan and Nepal and ask them to stand firm against tobacco industry pressure."

Now that so-called standardised or plain packaging — packs without branding, a standardised unappealing colour, and large warnings in both picture and text — have been proven to work in Australia, several new countries have committed to introduce similar legislation. Two years after Australia's 2012 introduction of plain packs, cigarette consumption was found to have dropped by 12.8%.

"Australia has been taken to court repeatedly by the tobacco industry since plain packs were introduced. Now the UK and Ireland, who have just passed similar laws, are being taken to court too," said Dr Latif. "Just as in India, Nepal and Pakistan, Big Tobacco is taking action against governments that are exercising their sovereign right to protect the health of their people. Countries around the world must unite and coordinate efforts to swiftly end the tobacco industry's tactics to delay this vital work."

He said that greater coordination across countries and regions on tobacco labelling and packaging could also help curb the illicit trade of tobacco products. With collaboration across borders, effective tracking and tracing programmes could be introduced to eliminate a trade that is estimated to account for one in every 10 cigarettes smoked.

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Obesity increases risk for common heart rhythm disorder

Obesity increases the risk for atrial fibrillation, a common heart rhythm disorder that can lead to blood clots, stroke and heart failure, a new analysis recently published in JACC Clinical Electrophysiology suggests.

Researchers reviewed data from 51 previously published studies covering more than 600,000 people and found that obesity also made it more likely that patients with atrial fibrillation would have complications after surgery to treat the condition.

"A lower risk of developing heart rhythm disorders such as atrial fibrillation can be added to the list of health benefits from weight reduction," senior study author Dr. Prashanthan Sanders, director of the center for heart rhythm disorders at the University of Adelaide in Australia, said by email. "Weight reduction in patients who have already established atrial fibrillation is also likely to be beneficial."

Millions of people worldwide have atrial fibrillation, which happens when rapid, disorganised electrical signals cause the heart's two upper chambers - the atria - to contract very quickly and irregularly. This stops blood from pumping completely into the heart's lower chambers, or ventricles, and prevents both portions of the heart from working together properly. Symptoms can come and go.

Globally, 1.9 billion adults are overweight or obese, according to the World Health Organisation. Obesity increases the risk of heart disease, diabetes, joint disorders and certain cancers. An obese person has accumulated so much body fat that it might have a negative effect on their health. If a person's body weight is at least 20% higher than it should be, he or she is considered obese.

## HEALTH bulletin

### Break the silence around menstrual hygiene

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Worldwide 28th May is celebrated as World Menstrual Hygiene Day and WASH United is the initiator of this day from the year 2014. There is an interesting reason behind the day; May is the 5th month of the year, representing 5 days a woman or girl spends menstruating each month. And, 28 represent the average number of days in a menstrual cycle, hence May 28.

The vision of this day is to create a world in which every woman and girl can manage her menstruation in a hygienic way — wherever she is — in privacy, safety and with dignity.

Despite menstruation being a natural process and a key sign of reproductive health, in many countries and culture it is treated a taboo. This has to stop. The continued silence around menstruation combined with limited access to information at home and at schools results in millions of women and girls having very little knowledge on what is happening to their bodies when they menstruate and how to deal with it. Many girls and women face challenges to manage their periods safely.

In addition to persisting taboos, women and girls' capacity to manage their periods is affected by a number of other factors, including limited access to affordable and hygienic sanitary materials and disposal

options leaving many to manage their periods in ineffective, uncomfortable and unhygienic ways.

Facing long-standing social stigmas attached to menstruating bodies, many become isolated from family, friends and their communities. Often, they miss school and productive work days and fall behind their male counterparts.

According to a study, the following below facts are found:

- About 52% of the female population is of reproductive age and most of them are menstruating every month which is a very natural process.
- Menstruation is still considered as a sign of marriage for a girl; 68% Bangladeshi women are forced to get married within 1-4 years of menstruation.

- 97% Bangladeshi women are suffering from cervical infection due to non-hygienic menstruation.

- 40% school going girls misses school at least 3 days / month during period. Even their lady teachers miss quite frequently.

- On an average an RMG worker remain absent for 6 days per month due to period related complication.

- In rural, millions of women are suffering from exposed or enlarged uterus which is hampering their normal sexual life and instigating their husband for second marriage or extra marital sexual partner.

Menstrual Hygiene Day will help to break the silence and build awareness about the fundamental role that good menstrual hygiene management plays in enabling women and girls to reach their full potential.



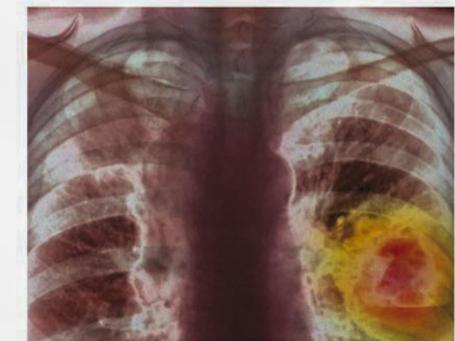
WSUP Bangladesh and NGO Forum for Public Health jointly organised a rally in the slum area at Mirpur, Dhaka to sensitise the most vulnerable women about the importance of menstrual hygiene.



### 10 reasons to love Onions

The humble onion is found in every kitchen, but its curative powers makes it an important medicinal plant too. Like garlic, it is a member of the lily family. Quite apart from its medicinal properties the onion is simply delicious. It forms the basis of so many dishes - whether raw, sautéed, baked, steamed or boiled, that it would be difficult to imagine the cuisine of any country without it. A quick glimpse at their incredible health benefits:

1. Rich in biotin for maintaining blood sugar balance.
2. Offers the body amazing cardiovascular benefits.
3. Acts as an anti-inflammatory food.
4. Good source of fiber for healthy digestion.
5. Full of manganese for bone production.
6. Contains vitamin C for clear skin.
7. Has been shown to ward off certain cancers.
8. Believed to help relieve coughs.
9. Have properties to relieve asthma symptoms.
10. Reduces the amount of free radicals in the body.



### Lung cancer therapy is milestone

A lung cancer therapy can more than double life expectancy in some patients, a "milestone" trial shows, reports BBC.

Nivolumab stops cancerous cells hiding from the body's own defences, leaving the cancer vulnerable to attack.

The results from 582 people, presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology, were described as "giving real hope to patients".

Lung cancer is the most deadly type of cancer, killing nearly 1.6 million people every year. It is hard to treat as it is often diagnosed late and many people with smoking-related diseases are unsuitable for surgery.

The trial, conducted in Europe and the US, was on patients who had advanced lung cancer and who had already tried other treatments. People on standard therapy lived for another 9.4 months at this stage, but those taking Nivolumab lived for 12.2 months on average.

## Knowing for better living

Cardiovascular disease causes **17.3 million** deaths each year, making it the world's **No. 1 killer**

- Take low fat diet
- Be physically active
- Eat vegetables and fresh fruits
- Maintain healthy weight
- Consult your Doctor



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