Graphic health warnings on tobacco packages

Fact sheet: Overview February 2008

From 28 February 2008, the regulations around graphic pictorial health warnings appearing on all tobacco packages sold in New Zealand came into force.

What are the new pictorial warnings?

There are 14 different pictorial warnings in total but only seven of them will be introduced in the first year. The remaining seven warnings will be introduced in year two and they will then be rotated each year thereafter. The first seven warnings to be introduced are:

1. Smoking causes blindness
2. Smoking causes gangrene
3. Smoking causes mouth cancer
4. You are not the only one smoking this cigarette
5. Over 80% of lung cancers are caused by smoking
6. Tobacco smoke is poisonous
7. Smoking causes heart attacks

The second set of seven warnings to be introduced in 2009 are:

1. Smoking can make you impotent
2. Smoking is highly addictive
3. Smoking causes foul and offensive breath
4. Your smoking can harm your kids
5. Smoking causes serious lung diseases
6. Smoking more than doubles your risk of stroke
7. Smoking blocks your arteries

Under the new regulations, 30 percent of the front and 90 percent of the back of cigarette packets will be covered in the new warnings, which include images of gangrenous toes, rotting teeth and gums, diseased lungs and smoking-damaged hearts. Cigarette packets will also carry the Quitline logo and freephone number and other information about quitting smoking.

Why are pictorial warnings being introduced?


The FCTC requires New Zealand to meet health warning standards of at least 30 percent of the principal display area on tobacco packaging by 27 February 2008. Currently, New Zealand’s six different text-only health warnings cover slightly less than 30 percent.

New Zealand was one of the first countries to ratify the FCTC and there are now more than 150 countries around the world that have ratified it. Pictorial health warnings are an important part of the World Health Organization’s six key strategies to fight the global tobacco epidemic.
Why are pictorial warnings being introduced? (cont.)

Research has shown that most smokers are only able to recall the more well-known illnesses caused by smoking and that they significantly underestimate the health risks from smoking.

Studies have shown that large pictorial health warnings are the most effective way for tobacco packages to convey the range and severity of health risks associated with tobacco consumption, and to encourage positive behavioural changes.

The new graphic health warnings are the latest step to combat the tobacco epidemic and complement initiatives such as New Zealand's comprehensive smokefree legislation. The aim is to help prevent some of the around 5,000 smoking-related deaths each year in New Zealand.

What are the key dates for the introduction of pictorial warnings?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28 February 2008</td>
<td>Regulations requiring graphic pictorial health warnings to appear on all tobacco products sold in New Zealand came into force. All tobacco products manufactured for sale in New Zealand or imported into the country must now display pictorial warnings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 2008</td>
<td>Supporting television commercials begin airing encouraging smokers to contact the Quitline.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 August 2008</td>
<td>Retailers are required to stop selling cigarettes and other tobacco products featuring the old text warnings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 2009</td>
<td>The other seven pictorial health warnings are introduced on tobacco packages and rotated each year thereafter.</td>
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Where can I get more information?

More information on the introduction of graphic pictorial health warnings on tobacco packages can be found on the Ministry of Health’s website at [www.moh.govt.nz/tobacco](http://www.moh.govt.nz/tobacco)

Where can I get help to quit smoking?

Want to quit smoking? The most important thing is to make a quit attempt. For help, talk to your doctor, pharmacist, quit smoking provider or call the national freephone Quitline on 0800 778 778 or visit The Quit Group web site at [www.quit.org.nz](http://www.quit.org.nz)