

Come Together to Promote Smoke Free Spaces

The World Health Organization and its partners call on countries around the world to observe World No Tobacco Day on May 31st. World No Tobacco Day is a day to not only raise awareness of the widespread harms of tobacco use, it is also a day to come together to reduce those harms.

Here in British Columbia we have the lowest smoking rate in Canada at 14 per cent but our rates are slowly starting to creep upwards, which means there is still more work to be done. So who is coming together to reduce tobacco harms here in B.C.? Local governments and health authorities are working together to decrease the harmful impact of tobacco in communities. This is being done through implementing bylaws and policy changes as well as supporting programs and partnerships with community stakeholders.

In the Interior Health region, our tobacco reduction program is partnering with local governments to help make communities healthier by restricting smoking in public outdoor spaces. Policies and bylaws that discourage people from smoking in places such as playgrounds, sports fields, parks, trails and beaches encourage smoke free living.

Smoke free outdoor public places have many benefits above and beyond reducing exposure to second hand smoke. One of the most effective ways to prevent children and youth from starting to smoke is to provide them with smoke free environments where they live, work, play and go to school. Smoke free public places also provide a supportive environment for those who want to quit smoking and they help protect our environment by reducing the risk of forest fires and toxic litter.

We can all come together to make a difference for present and future generations. If you would like more information on how we can all work together to make communities healthier, check out [PlanH](http://planh.ca/take-action/healthy-people/page/tobacco-reduction) (<http://planh.ca/take-action/healthy-people/page/tobacco-reduction>). PlanH supports local government engagement and partnerships aimed at creating healthier communities. Their tobacco reduction webpage contains valuable information and resources for communities on smoke free outdoor public spaces, smoke free housing options, public tobacco education, cessation programs and more.

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