Tobacco contains a wide range of harmful substances as well as a powerfully addictive drug, nicotine. Smoking tobacco significantly increases the risk of numerous cancers, including lung, esophagus, oral cavity, pharynx, and larynx. Smoking is also associated with many diseases other than cancer. By 2030, tobacco is projected to kill 8 million people annually.

While cigarette consumption is decreasing in high-income countries, it is increasing in many low- and middle-income countries. Between 1990 and 2009, for example, cigarette consumption decreased by 26% in Western Europe, while it increased by 57% in the Middle East and Africa. At the same time, few smokers in low- and medium-income countries are quitting smoking by middle age, when quitting can avoid more than 60% of the risk of lung cancer.

Where smoking prevalence is increasing, females may account for more of the increase than males. In high-income countries, non-traditional tobacco products such as snus, lozenges, and chewing tobacco are promoted as alternatives in smoke-free environments or smoking cessation aids, but they are untested and may have unknown effects. For example, snus contains tobacco that causes cancer of the oral cavity, esophagus, and pancreas. Initial laboratory analyses of e-cigarettes found carcinogens and toxic chemicals in some samples. However, more research is needed before their harm or benefit can be accurately determined.

Non-smokers exposed to environmental tobacco smoke are also at increased risk of lung cancer and possibly other cancers. Secondhand smoke is estimated to cause 21,400 lung cancer deaths worldwide each year.

Lung cancer is highly fatal. In order to reduce these deaths, countries must work to prevent initiation of tobacco use in young people and encourage current smokers to quit.

Preventable deaths: a substantial proportion of cancer deaths are caused by tobacco, especially among men.

The waterpipe, which features flavored tobacco smoked in a communal setting, has become popular in many Global Youth Tobacco Survey countries.

In Lebanon, 25% of students reported smoking the waterpipe. Among youth and young adults, and its use is increasing in many low- and middle-income countries.

The workpipe is a term which features flavored tobacco smoked in a communal setting, has become popular among youth and young adults, and its use is increasing in many Global Youth Tobacco Survey countries.