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**Pages:** 2 (not including cover)

**To:** All Central Zone Physicians

**From:** Dr. Ifeoma Achebe , Medical Officer of Health – Central Zone

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Dear Colleagues:

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Canada. As such we are using the opportunity of this year's World No Tobacco Day to remind you of your role in helping raise awareness on the health hazards of tobacco use and second hand and third hand smoke.

Established by the World Health Organization (WHO), World No Tobacco Day has been an annual observance on May 31 for more than 20 years. The occasion of World No Tobacco Day provides an opportunity to increase public awareness regarding the hazards of using tobacco and tobacco-like products.

Alberta Health Services is using this time to encourage Albertans to choose smoke-free environments, while raising awareness on the health risks associated with exposure to second and third-hand tobacco smoke.

Physicians do have a prominent role to play in tobacco control; at the individual level they can help educate on the harms of tobacco use, exposure to second hand and third hand smoke and electronic smoking products use. Children are particularly vulnerable to the harms of second-hand smoke because they are still developing physically and have higher breathing rates. Third-hand smoke builds up on surfaces in a vehicle or home (including furniture, clothing, drapes and carpets) where it can last for months. Children are very sensitive to third-hand smoke exposure as they breathe near, crawl on, play on, touch and even taste contaminated surfaces.

While they may not produce second or third-hand smoke like the traditional cigarettes do, there are potential health risks associated with exposure to the vapour from electronic smoking products – more commonly known as e-cigarettes. Research has shown that vapour produced by some e-cigarettes can contain toxins that increase the risks of inflammation and constriction in the lungs and airways. There are also no standards or labelling requirements for e-cigarettes. Because chemicals in the cartridges can vary, it is hard to know what e-cigarette users and people nearby are breathing in when the liquid is vaporized.

The overall prevalence of smoking among pregnant women in Alberta has decreased from 25% in 1999 to 15% in 2010, however tobacco use is still a leading cause of health problems for mothers and adverse health outcomes for the infants. Central Zone presently has the second highest rate of maternal prenatal tobacco use in the province with some community rates as high as 46.6% prevalence. A substantial proportion of women who quit smoking during pregnancy resume smoking before delivery or postpartum: 25% before delivery, 50% within 4 months of delivery, 70-90% by 1 year postpartum it is important to address tobacco use as often as possible with this population (Alberta Perinatal Health Report Data Sheet 2010).

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AHS has recently released a practice guideline for tobacco reduction in the reproductive years. To find out current best evidence and what you can do to assist pregnant and post partum patients exposed to tobacco products, please go to: [http://www.albertaquits.ca/files/AB/files/library/TFF\\_Web\\_2015\\_04\\_21.pdf](http://www.albertaquits.ca/files/AB/files/library/TFF_Web_2015_04_21.pdf)

As a physician, you can also play a role in tobacco control at the community level by supporting policy measures aimed at encouraging a smoke free environment and the availability of tobacco cessation resources.

Please find below some additional information and resources to assist you:

- **Let's Talk About Second-Hand and Third-Hand Smoke - Information Sheet**  
[http://www.albertaquits.ca/files/AB/files/library/Second\\_and\\_Third\\_Hand\\_Smoke\\_Dec\\_14.pdf](http://www.albertaquits.ca/files/AB/files/library/Second_and_Third_Hand_Smoke_Dec_14.pdf)
- **Let's Talk About E-Cigarettes - Information Sheet**  
[http://www.albertaquits.ca/files/AB/files/library/Electronic\\_cigarettes\\_update\\_August\\_13.pdf](http://www.albertaquits.ca/files/AB/files/library/Electronic_cigarettes_update_August_13.pdf)
- **Sim Smoke; Are you Being Exposed?** An interactive online activity to calculate individual risk of second hand smoke exposure.  
[http://simsmoke.exposurescience.org/welcome\\_to\\_simsmoke](http://simsmoke.exposurescience.org/welcome_to_simsmoke)

Thank you for your assistance in raising awareness on the health hazards related to tobacco use.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ifeoma Achebe  
Medical Officer of Health  
Alberta Health Services  
Central Zone