

Key message points

This new brief by the WHO documents the serious risk that tobacco use creates for dementia. **As many as 14% of Alzheimer's disease cases are potentially attributed to smoking.**

The brief forms the basis to add messages about brain health and dementia risk into country public health anti-smoking programs population level interventions.

Given that at present no treatments are available to cure or alter the progressive course of dementia, it is essential to identify modifiable risk factors for reducing the occurrence of the disease, delaying its onset or reducing its burden. Quitting tobacco use could help reduce the risk of dementia, and encouraging and supporting current tobacco users to quit should be a priority.

The brief documents that one of the major underlying risk factors for the other major non-communicable diseases is also a major risk factor for dementia underscores the need for integration of Alzheimer's issues into global and national NCD planning as called for in the original UN declaration on NCD's in September 2011.

Showing higher dementia risk because of smoking is not the same as proving a cause and effect relationship; dementia has potentially many modifiable risk factors as well as non-modifiable risk factors such as age and genetics. *That said, regardless of what message may motivate a person or society to act on smoking, never smoking or quitting has multiple health benefits.*