

Public Consultation on Potential Measures to Enhance Singapore's Tobacco Control Policies

Singapore, 29 December 2015 – The Health Promotion Board, together with the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Health Sciences Authority (HSA), will be holding a public consultation to seek views from the public on a suite of potential tobacco control measures that Singapore could potentially introduce to more effectively discourage Singaporeans from picking up smoking, and encourage smokers to kick the habit. The public consultation will be held for a period of 12 weeks from 29 December 2015 to 29 March 2016.

2. Singapore adopts a multi-pronged approach to drive down its smoking prevalence. This includes a wide range of strategies such as legislation, which includes restrictions on tobacco advertising and smoking prohibitions in public places, public education, the provision of smoking cessation services and taxation.

3. As a result of such comprehensive tobacco control measures, Singapore's smoking rate has been steadily decreasing, from 18.3% in 1992 to 13.3% in 2013¹. While this is one of the lowest smoking rates in the world², Singapore aims to reduce its smoking prevalence rate even further to 12% by 2020.

4. To achieve this, Singapore continuously explores other tobacco control measures which can be implemented in our context. MOH, HPB and HSA would like to seek the public's views on the following measures that are being studied for potential implementation in Singapore:

a) Reducing the appeal of tobacco product through standardised packaging

Studies have shown that branding and designs on tobacco packaging can influence smoking choices and increase the appeal of tobacco products, especially among young people³. To counter this, Singapore is studying the introduction of standardised

¹ National Health Surveillance Survey 2013

² World Health Organisation. WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic 2015. "Raising taxes on tobacco". Last accessed on 23 Nov 2015: http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/178574/1/9789240694606_eng.pdf?ua=1&ua=1

³ Report of the independent review undertaken by Sir Cyril Chantler. Last accessed 15 Oct 2015: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/health/10035-TSO-2901853-Chantler-Review->

packaging for tobacco products. Standardised packaging, also known as 'plain packaging', requires all tobacco products to be placed in unattractive packaging, without any promotional information (e.g. trademarks, logos, colour schemes and imagery), and carry health warnings.

b) Enhancing graphic health warnings

Currently, all smoked tobacco products sold in Singapore are required to have graphic health warning images occupy 50% of the space on the front and 50% on the back of all tobacco packaging. The warnings are intended to help prevent youths and non-smokers from picking up smoking, inform smokers about the risks of tobacco use and encourage smokers to quit. The current graphic health warnings images have been used since 2013.

Evidence suggests that the use of large and noticeable graphic health warnings can prevent smoking initiation and encourage smokers to quit⁴. The World Health Organization recommends that countries should consider increasing the size of graphic health warnings to cover more than 50% of tobacco packaging and replacing the images on such warnings every two to three years to increase its effectiveness.

c) Restricting the sale of flavoured tobacco products

Flavoured tobacco products are products that have a flavour, i.e. smell or taste other than tobacco. Examples include menthol as well as fruit and candy flavours.

Studies have shown that flavoured tobacco products, particularly menthol cigarettes, have a greater appeal among youths⁵. The use of flavours can mislead the user into thinking that the tobacco product is less harmful as the flavours cover up the actual harshness of tobacco. With the use of attractive packaging and strong promotion, flavoured tobacco products may lead to more people using tobacco products. We would like to consult the public on whether the sale of these products should be restricted.

[ACCESSIBLE.PDF?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=standardised-packaging-of-tobacco-report-of-the-independent-review-undertaken-by-sir-cyril-chantler-pdf](#)

⁴ Tobacco Labelling Resource Centre. Research & Reports on Health Warnings. Last accessed 15 Oct 2015 :

<http://www.tobaccolabels.ca/research-reports/hwreports/>

⁵ US Food & Drug Administration (USFDA). Report of the Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee. Last accessed 16 Oct 2015:

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/AdvisoryCommittees/CommitteesMeetingMaterials/TobaccoProductsScientificAdvisoryCommittee/UCM223003.pdf>

Ibid.

University of Waterloo. Propel Centre for Population Health Impact. Last accessed 16 Oct 2015:

<https://uwaterloo.ca/propel/news/flavoured-tobacco-big-issue-canadian-youth>

d) Increasing minimum legal age for the purchase, possession and use of tobacco in Singapore, from 18 to 21 years old

The current minimum legal age for the purchase, possession and use of tobacco in Singapore is 18 years of age. The World Health Organization, in its 2008 Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic, stated that persons who do not start smoking before the age of 21 are unlikely to ever begin. In addition, studies have shown that young persons who start smoking early are likely to continue smoking into adulthood⁶. We would like to hear the public's views on whether we should prevent people from buying tobacco until they are 21 years old to delay smoking initiation among our youths.

5. MOH, HPB and HSA would like to invite the public to submit feedback on the tobacco control measures being studied that could further reduce the Nation's smoking prevalence rate. Public may use the feedback form available at www.hpb.gov.sg/tobacco-public-consult-2015. All feedback should reach the Health Promotion Board by 29 March 2016, 1700hrs.

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About Health Promotion Board

The Health Promotion Board (HPB) was established in 2001 as a statutory board under the Ministry of Health with the vision of building "A Nation of Healthy People". HPB aims to empower the people of Singapore to attain optimal health, increase the quality and years of healthy life and prevent illnesses, disability and premature death. As the key partner of national health promotion and disease prevention programmes, HPB spearheads health education, promotion and prevention programmes as well as creates a health-supportive environment in Singapore. It develops and organises relevant health promotion and disease prevention programmes, reaching out to the healthy, the at-risk and the unhealthy at all stages of life – children, youths, adults and older Singapore residents. HPB's health promotion programmes include nutrition, mental health, physical activity, smoking control and communicable disease education. HPB also promotes healthy ageing, integrated health screening, and chronic disease education and management.

More information can be found at www.hpb.gov.sg.

⁶ Khuder SA, et al. "Age at Smoking Onset and its Effect on Smoking Cessation," *Addict Behav* 1999; 24(5):673-7