

What do sex and gender have to do with tobacco use?

Sex related factors affect the biological responses to tobacco use and treatments, and gendered factors such as social, cultural and economic norms, relationships and opportunities affect smoking initiation, patterns of use, cessation and responses to tobacco policies, for men, women, boys and girls.

Some **sex-related factors** identified in the tobacco research literature include:

- Sex hormones & smaller airways increase women's risk of respiratory illness
- The menstrual cycle influences withdrawal symptoms
- Pharmacological smoking cessation therapies may be less effective for women
- Smoking has damaging effects on both sperm and ovarian reserve
- Male smokers are more likely to have abnormal lipids in the blood
- Male smokers are more likely to develop bladder cancer and oral cancers
- Male smokers are more likely to develop insulin resistance

There are also gendered reasons for, and meanings attached to smoking, and barriers to quitting. Some gender-related factors identified in the literature include:

- Women more often smoke to control negative mood and emotions
- Trauma and smoking are highly correlated in both men and women
- Men are more often exposed to second-hand smoke at work and in public places
- Women are more often concerned that quitting would result in weight gain
- The tobacco industry links smoking with empowerment and beauty for women and strength and mystery for men
- Women are more likely to experience depression—a barrier to cessation
- Expectant women, and new mothers and fathers experience smoking related stigma
- Women may not have the power to implement home smoking restrictions

Tobacco control policies have been roundly critiqued for lacking a gender lens, and calls have been made for approaches that are gender transformative. These are approaches that consciously improve the equality of women and men, girls and boys, while concurrently seeking to improve smoking cessation and reduction outcomes.



Examples of Gender Transformative Tobacco Control

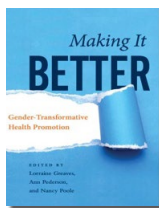
Gender-transformative approaches to tobacco actively examine, question, and challenge stereotypical gender norms and imbalances of power as a means of reducing tobacco use along with increasing gender equity. Some examples:

- Avoiding harmful stereotypes and attitudes about women and men in health promotion campaigns
- Addressing the social needs of women and men who smoke in treatment
- Supporting women's political, social and economic empowerment in designing policies
- Engaging men in changing social norms about substance use and masculinity in programming
- Systematically integrating sex and gender analysis in program planning and policy design
- Including social justice and human rights goals in tobacco control

Canadian Leadership, Global Impact

- The Centre of Excellence for Women's Health (CEWH) established the first and only research program on girls, women, gender and tobacco in 1997, led by Lorraine Greaves (founding Executive Director and current Senior Investigator at the CEWH). In the past 20 years, we have conducted over 50 projects on tobacco. We have studied the gendered impact of tobacco control policies on women and men, argued for sex, gender and diversity analysis in policy making, examined the links between gender equity and tobacco use, and advocate the application of gender transformative approaches to tobacco control policy and practice.
- Our reports, articles, books and popular documents have been translated and used in countries from Ireland to Spain to China, as they offer practical gender analysis in areas such as smoking during reproductive years, quitting smoking and understanding the gendered impacts of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO-FCTC).
- The Trauma/Gender/Substance Use project will guide the further integration of trauma informed, gender informed and gender transformative practices into substance use prevention, health promotion, treatment, harm reduction and policy in Canada in 2017-18.

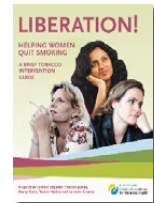
Selected CEWH tobacco publications:



Making it Better: Gender Transformative Health Promotion

Explores the ways in which gendered norms affect health and social equity for all human beings, and invites us to rethink conventional approaches to health promotion and to strive for transformative initiatives and policies. Includes chapters addressing gender-transformative tobacco control.

<https://womenspress.canadianscholars.ca/books/making-it-better>



Liberation! Helping Women Quit Smoking: A Brief Tobacco-Intervention Guide

This guide offers support to service providers in diverse contexts (e.g. within transition houses, community mental health teams, or primary health care) to start a conversation with women about their smoking and the possibility of quitting.

http://bcccewh.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/2012_Liberation-HelpingWomenQuitSmoking.pdf



Sifting the Evidence: Gender and Tobacco Control

Examines the role of gender in tobacco use, gender and health impacts, and gender dependent responses to cessation efforts.

http://www.who.int/tobacco/resources/publications/WHO_Gender_Sifting.pdf?ua=1



Hearing the Perspectives of Aboriginal Girls on Smoking

A qualitative study on smoking by Aboriginal adolescent girls, conducted in partnership with six Aboriginal communities in BC. Findings shed light on how age, gender, culture and context intersect to shape Aboriginal girls' experiences of smoking.

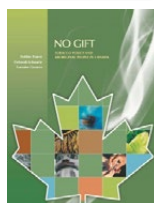
http://bcccewh.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/2009_AboriginalAdolescentGirlsSmoking.pdf



Smokescreen: Women's Smoking and Social Control

This book authored by Dr. Lorraine Greaves examines the evolution of cultural pressures on women's smoking, presents qualitative research on the meanings of smoking for women, and the impact of health and tobacco policies on women's tobacco use, prevention and cessation.

<https://fernwoodpublishing.ca/book/smoke-screen>



No Gift: Tobacco Policy and Aboriginal People in Canada

This discussion paper examines issues related to tobacco control policy, taxation, and legislation as they affect Aboriginal women and men in British Columbia, and identifies potentially differential impacts when gender differences are taken into account. Gender was used as a lens to examine three issues critical to nature of women's work.

http://bcccewh.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/2008_No-Gift-Tobacco-Policy-and-Aboriginal-People-in-Canada.pdf



Reducing Harm: A Better Practices Review of Tobacco Policy and Vulnerable Populations

This report reviews evidence of the effectiveness of three aspects of tobacco control policy on diverse groups of males and females particularly vulnerable to smoking: Aboriginal women and men and individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

http://bcccewh.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/2006_Reducing_Harm-.pdf



Expecting to Quit: A Best-Practices Review of Smoking Cessation Interventions for Pregnant and Postpartum Girls and Women

This revised edition, available in English and French, reviews research and intervention development in the years since the first 2003 edition. It reflects recent emerging interventions and better practices with a variety of groups of pregnant and postpartum women, including high-risk populations of pregnant smokers.

http://bcccewh.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/2011_Expecting-to-Quit-2nd-edition.pdf



Turning a New Leaf: Women, Tobacco, and the Future

This report, available in English, French and Spanish, provides a much-needed picture of women's tobacco use in different social contexts, identifies the health effects of tobacco, and describes women's role in tobacco production and marketing. It also provides direction on assessing and addressing the gendered issues of tobacco control in policy, programming, and research in order to reduce the devastating effects of tobacco on women.

http://bcccewh.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/2006_Turning-New-Leaf.pdf

Selected publications from CEWH authors

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17. Torchalla, I., Okoli, C. T., Bottorff, J. L., Qu, A., Poole, N., & Greaves, L. (2012). Smoking cessation programs targeted to women: a systematic review. *Women & health*, 52(1), 32-54.

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