

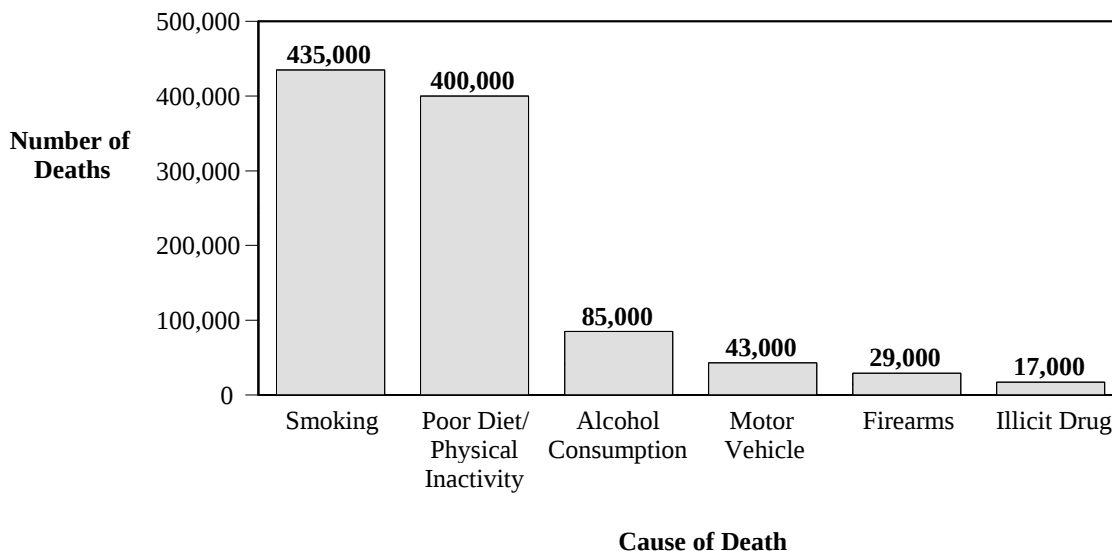
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Smoking the Leading Cause of Death in the U.S. in 2000

Smoking was the leading cause of death in the United States in 2000, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Of the 2.4 million deaths in the U.S. in 2000, approximately one-half “could be attributed to a limited number of largely preventable behaviors and exposures” (p. 1242), including smoking, drinking, using illicit drugs, poor diet, and physical inactivity. Researchers estimate that approximately 435,000 (18%) of the 2.4 million deaths were attributable to smoking. Poor diet and physical inactivity was the second highest cause of death, responsible for 400,000 deaths in the same year (17%). In addition, 85,000 deaths were due to alcohol consumption and 17,000 deaths were caused by the use of illicit drugs. Motor vehicles and firearms were responsible for 43,000 and 29,000 deaths, respectively. According to the authors, “Our findings indicate that interventions to prevent and increase cessation of smoking, improve diet, and increase physical activity must become much higher priorities in the public health and health care systems” (p. 1242).

Number of Deaths in the United States in 2000, by Selected Cause of Death*
(N=2,403,351 deaths)



*Other causes of death were microbial agents (75,000), toxic agents (55,000), and sexual behavior (20,000).

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Mokdad, A., Marks, J., Stroup, D., and Gerberding, J. “Actual Causes of Death in the United States, 2000,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 291(10):1238-1245, 2004. For more information, contact Dr. Ali H. Mokdad at amokdad@cdc.gov.