



The Rundown

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A Look at Cigarette Warnings Around the World

BY: LEA WINERMAN

The Food and Drug Administration unveiled 36 proposed warning labels for cigarette packages and ads on Wednesday. The new labels will be much bigger and more graphic than what U.S. consumers are used to seeing: They'll cover half of the front and back of a pack of cigarettes and 20 percent of every cigarette ad, and may include images like corpses and diseased lungs.

New U.S. Warning Labels (Click to Enlarge):



View a slide show of all of the proposed warning labels [here](#).

"We want to make sure every person who picks up a pack of cigarettes is going to know exactly what risk they're taking," said FDA commissioner Dr. Margaret Hamburg.

The move follows the lead of many other countries around the world, including Canada, Brazil and the United Kingdom, that have in the past few years begun to require large pictorial warning labels on tobacco products -- some of which are even more graphic than those the FDA has proposed.

From the U.K.:



From New Zealand:



Exposure to tobacco smoke increases the risk of your children contracting serious illnesses and dying. Babies exposed to tobacco smoke are at greater risk.



Smoking causes most lung cancers in New Zealand.



Smoking causes blindness by damaging the back of

From Brazil:



Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said Wednesday that the new ads are part of a coordinated campaign aimed at reducing adult smoking rates in the U.S. from 20 percent to 12 percent by 2020. Smoking rates plunged over the past four decades (42 percent of adults smoked in 1965), but have plateaued around 20 percent in recent years.

The new warning label requirements were included in a law passed in June 2009 that gave the FDA the authority to regulate tobacco advertising and use.

The agency has developed nine warning statements (such as "Cigarettes cause cancer" and "Smoking can kill you") and proposed four possible images to accompany each one. They'll pick the final images next June, taking into account both public comments and an 18,000-person study that will test the images' effectiveness. Then, cigarette manufacturers will have until the fall of 2012 to put the new warnings on all of their packaging and ads.

A spokesman for cigarette maker R.J. Reynolds **told the Associated Press** that the company is reviewing the labeling plan. R.J. Reynolds and other companies have filed a lawsuit, pending in federal appeals court, that argues that the new labels will make companies' branding difficult, if not impossible, to see.

Meanwhile, some **research has suggested** that large, graphic warning labels are more effective than smaller, text-only labels at getting smokers to change their behavior.

"Graphic warning labels are significantly more effective in educating people about the harms of the product," says Geoffrey Fong, a researcher at the University of Waterloo who studies cigarette warning labels. "They think about the risk more, and it's more likely to inspire them to think about quitting and make actual quit attempts."

FDA Commissioner Hamburg said Wednesday that novelty is important in getting people's attention, and that the agency will continue to do research and will change and update the images over time.

Meanwhile, public health groups and researchers praised the new warning labels. "It's as if the American public has become immune to anti-tobacco efforts. To see the HHS undertake this initiative is very encouraging and will, we hope, make new progress in combating this enormous public health problem," Roy S. Herbst, chair of the American Association for Cancer Research's Task Force on Tobacco and Cancer, said in a statement.

And Gary Giovino, a community health researcher at the University of Buffalo, said that the American warning label has been "among the most pitiful in the world."

"This is a step in the right direction," he said. "I hope they'll make them as strong as they can possibly be."

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