

Smoking cessation rates stall

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The number of U.S. smokers -- about 45 million -- in 2005 was the same as in 2004, prompting suggestions that the eight-year tobacco battle has hit a lull.

To maintain the downward trend, the national Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta suggested raising the price of tobacco products, launching media quit-smoking campaigns and reducing out-of-pocket consumer expenses for programs and therapies designed to help smokers quit.

Several factors may have contributed to the plateau, including states cutting back on anti-smoking programs, more slowly rising prices for cigarettes and more tobacco company advertising, the CDC said.

The CDC's findings were included in the agency's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

Men still were more likely to smoke than women, 23.9 percent to 18.1 percent, the CDC said. American Indians and Alaskan natives reported the highest rate at 32 percent, followed by whites, 21.9 percent; and African Americans, 21.5 percent.

The smokiest state? Kentucky, with 28.7 percent of the population lighting up, the CDC said. Utah was the state with the lowest percentage of smokers, 11.5 percent.

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