

Orientation:

- Smokers inhale toxins exceeding legal maximum limits

Norwegian cigarettes contain far more cancer-causing chemicals than what is legally allowed, new tests reveal.

- These are shocking results. Cigarettes contain higher levels of cancer-causing chemicals than what is legally permitted. The consequence is that cigarettes become even more harmful to health, says Ms. Anne Lise Ryel, Secretary General of the Norwegian Cancer Society.

- We have clear laws and regulations which set maximum limits for nicotine, tar and carbon monoxide in cigarettes. These substances are addictive and cause serious life-threatening illnesses. However, recent measurements show that the tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide levels of cigarettes sold in Norway exceed the legal permitted level. Many have extremely high levels of all three substances, she explains.

Five brands tested

On behalf of the Norwegian Cancer Society, an independent laboratory at the Netherlands National Institute of Public Health and the Environment ran random tests of Norwegian cigarettes. In total, five brands were tested. The laboratory used the same method as officially required, but with an important adjustment: for the test method and results to be more accurate, small ventilation holes on the cigarette filters were covered - just as smokers do in practice with their fingers and lips when they smoke. Dr Reinskje Talhout of the National Institute of Public Health and the Environment in the Netherlands points out that the prescribed method used by the tobacco industry without covering the ventilation holes does not give the right amounts of toxins that smokers inhale.

- The problem is that this method does not correspond to human smoking behaviour and does not provide an accurate estimation of the quantity of harmful substances that smokers inhale, says Dr Reinskje Talhout.

Of the entire five cigarette brands tested with blocked ventilation holes, all contain illegally high levels of carbon monoxide. Four out of five exceed the maximum levels of tar, and all give far higher nicotine contents than specified on the cigarette packages.

Ms Ryel is worried this may have cost more human lives.

- Most people know that smoking is dangerous. If smokers knew that cigarettes had up to six times more toxins, there is reason to believe that many would have worked even harder to quit smoking, she says.

Illegal cigarettes must be withdrawn

In the summer of 2017, the Norwegian Cancer Society made the Norwegian health authorities aware of its suspicions that the ventilation holes are making the cigarettes illegal in Norway. Ms Ryel assumed that the authorities would begin testing cigarettes sold in the country. She is very surprised and disappointed that the health authorities have not taken any actions so far.

- It has now become apparent to us that our health authorities do not have the proper control mechanism to guarantee that cigarettes sold in Norway are in full compliance with our laws.

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- Just as we have a Food Safety Authority that controls the safety of the food we buy, we took it for granted that a similar control system was available for cigarettes, a product which kills half of its users, says Ryel.

In light of the new evidence these tests provide, Ms Ryel urges the health authorities to act immediately.

- The authorities have to protect people's lives and health and must act now. Independent measurements have now revealed that Norwegian smokers inhale toxins far exceeding the legal maximum limits. We appeal to the authorities to stop the sale of all illegal cigarettes.

- At the same time, we demand that the authorities establish a system for better monitoring and control of the tobacco industry's activities. We need to ensure that no tobacco products more toxic than legal levels are sold in Norway, concluded Ms. Ryel.

The test results of cigarettes sold in Norway:

On behalf of the Norwegian Cancer Society, an independent laboratory at the Netherlands National Institute of Public Health and the Environment ran random tests of Norwegian cigarettes. In total, five different brands were tested. The laboratory used the same method as officially required, but with an important adjustment: for the tests methods and results to be more accurate, small ventilation holes on the cigarette filters were covered - just as smokers do in practice with their fingers and lips.

Test results:

Brand	Levels of Tar from the ingredient labelling on the package	Levels of Tar measured with covered ventilation holes	Deviation
Prince red	10 mg,	14,0 mg	+ 40 % - Illegal
Prince white	8,0 mg	12,3 mg	+ 53,8 % Illegal
Marlboro red	10,0 mg	13,5 mg	+ 35 % - Illegal
Marlboro gold	8,0 mg	10,6 mg	+ 32,5 % Illegal
Kent white	1,0 mg	6,8 mg	+ 580,0 %

Over legal limits: 10 mg tar is the legal limit. Four out of five brands are over the legal limits of tar when the ventilation holes are covered.

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Brand	Levels of Nicotine from the ingredient labelling on the package	Levels of Nicotine measured with covered ventilation holes	Deviation
Prince red	0,9 mg	1,11 mg	+ 23,3 % Illegal
Prince white	0,7 mg	0,95 mg	+ 35,7 %
Marlboro red	0,8 mg	0,87 mg	+ 8,7 %
Marlboro gold	0,6 mg	0,73 mg	+ 21,7 %
Kent white	0,1 mg	0,59 mg	+ 490,0 %

Over legal limit: 1 mg nicotine is the legal limit. Prince Red is over the legal limit when the ventilation holes are covered.

Brand	Level of Carbon monoxide from the ingredient labelling on the package	Level of Carbon Monoxide measured with covered ventilation holes	Deviation
Prince red	9,0 mg	14,7 mg	+ 63,3 % Illegal
Prince White	8,0 mg	14,3 mg	+ 78,8 % Illegal
Marlboro red	10,0 mg	14,4 mg	+ 44,0 % Illegal
Marlboro gold	9,0 mg	11,6 mg	+ 28,9 % Illegal
Kent White	2,0 mg	10,9 mg	+ 445,0 % Illegal

Over legal limits: 10 mg Carbon Monoxide is the legal level. All brands are illegal when the ventilation holes are covered.