

FACT SHEET

What do we know about using Breath Carbon Monoxide testers?

Some Indigenous Tobacco Control projects have used the Smokerlyzer Breath Carbon Monoxide® tester as part of their program. The Smokerlyzer is used to ascertain abstinence, that is how heavily a person smokes and/or how long since their last cigarette.

Although some projects have found the Smokerlyzer® to be a useful tool, its effectiveness has not been firmly established.

Following is a list of factors for and against its use.

Pros

- ✧ Immediate
- ✧ Non-invasive
- ✧ Can be used in a wide variety of clinical settings
- ✧ Relatively inexpensive
- ✧ Simple to apply
- ✧ Information provided instantly
- ✧ Detects heavy smoking
- ✧ Widely used

Cons

- ✧ Low levels of smoking are not detected
- ✧ It requires relatively recent exposure due to low levels of smoking
- ✧ Physical exercise can alter the measurable CO levels in some individuals
- ✧ Initial cost of monitor
- ✧ Difficulty in determining the contribution of secondhand smoke
- ✧ Difficulty for some tested to hold their breath for the time needed (15 seconds)
- ✧ Inaccuracies between self-reported smoking and what is measured
- ✧ Failure to identify a significant proportion of those who admitted to continuing smoking
- ✧ Cut-off levels of CO are not standardized
- ✧ Unable to detect the use of smokeless products
- ✧ Cannabis smoking may alter the results
- ✧ Breath CO levels may be raised due to numerous inflammatory lung diseases
- ✧ The effectiveness of measuring CO as an aid for smoking cessation is not conclusive.

This information was sourced with the aid of Quit Victoria Melbourne.

CO - Carbon Monoxide



Centre for Excellence in Indigenous Tobacco Control

Level 4, 207 Bouverie Street
The University of Melbourne, Vic 3010
Tel: (03) 8344 0883
Email: ceitc-info@unimelb.edu.au
Web: www.ceitc.org.au