

# 27% REDUCTION IN HEART ATTACKS FOUND

AFTER STARKVILLE IMPLEMENTS SMOKE-FREE ORDINANCE

Current research shows that smoking bans in Starkville have contributed to a 27% reduction in heart attacks of local residents in the three years that followed the smoke-free law. Starkville enacted a smoke-free law in May 2006, and several other Mississippi communities quickly followed suit. Scientists at the Social Science Research Center of MSU are currently collecting heart attack admission data from several hospitals in the state in order to determine if heart attack admissions have decreased in communities that have enacted smoke-free laws. Oktibbeha County Hospital, located in Starkville, was the first hospital to provide data on this finding. The scientists compared the standardized number of heart attacks for three years prior to the smoke-free law and the three years following the enactment of the smoke-free law, and found that the number of heart attacks decreased substantially. Although these results are preliminary and the study will not be completed until several other Mississippi communities are examined, this finding highlights the immediate impact on health that smoke-free laws in Mississippi can have.

## Supporting Evidence

Over the past 20 years, approximately half of the States, and an additional 360 communities

have prohibited smoking inside of bars and restaurants. After Helena, Montana enacted a smoke-free law, local cardiologists began to notice that they were treating fewer patients for heart attacks. The ensuing research led to more than a dozen scientific studies that have found that smoking bans have led to a decrease in heart attack admissions. Importantly, each of these studies has examined very different types of places, from small cities, to entire States, and even entire countries. Although the methods and the size of the heart attack reductions have varied across studies, the general finding has remained consistent.

In September, two independent meta-analyses concluded that heart attack admissions had dropped significantly following the implementation of smoke-free laws. The review published in *Circulation: The Journal of the American Heart Association* concluded that heart attack admissions decreased, on average, by 17% the first year that a smoke-free law was in place, and that this benefit increases with time. Independently, the review published in the *American Journal of Cardiology*, reviewed five of the seminal studies on the effects of smoking bans in risk for heart attack and reached a similar conclusion. It states, “When taken in the aggregate, these studies offer consistent evidence that smoking bans are associated with reduction in the risk for AMI (Acute Myocardial Infarction, AKA heart attacks) in the general public.”



The Institute of Medicine (IOM) is an independent, nonprofit organization that works outside of the government. Their mission is to provide unbiased and authoritative advice to decision makers and the public. This month the IOM released another review that reached the same conclusion. It stated, “Consistent data confirms for the committee that smoking bans do, in fact, decrease the rate of heart attacks.” Given the mission of the Institute, this report goes a long way

have a heart attack. Just as aspirin can reduce the risk of a heart attack by decreasing platelet activity, secondhand smoke increases the risk of having a heart attack by increasing platelet activity and increasing the likelihood of a free-floating blood clot.

## Conclusion

Research shows a dramatic decrease of heart attacks in the last three years due to

**Without spending a dime, the community of Starkville has decreased heart attacks by more than 25 percent. The emerging scientific consensus clearly demonstrates that communities can reduce heart attacks simply by prohibiting smoking in indoor public places. Smoke-free laws are very popular with the public and are free to implement.**

*Robert McMillen, Ph.D. (2009)*

towards establishing a scientific consensus on the findings that smoking bans decrease the number of heart attacks.

## Secondhand Smoke – The Anti-Aspirin

Many of us are aware that aspirin can reduce our risk of heart attack by ‘thinning’ the blood. More specifically, aspirin reduces blood platelet activity. When these platelets are active, they become sticky and can form free-floating clots. If these clots become lodged in part of the heart, a person will

smoking bans. If communities continue to follow through with making public areas smoke free this number will continue to decrease. Continuing on this path will generate healthier communities for future generations.

Currently, more than two-thirds (71.0%) of the U.S. population lives in a state or a community that has a comprehensive smoke-free law, yet less than 10% of Mississippians live in a community with a comprehensive smoke-free law that applies to all public indoor places.

**For More Information, Contact**

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