

Measures taken by the Government to curb the prevalence of tobacco use among youth and make schools to tobacco free

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As per the findings of the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS-4), 2019, 8.4% Indian students aged 13–15 years were using tobacco in some form or the other. Findings of the survey available in the public domain at <https://ntcp.mohfw.gov.in/assets/document/surveys-reportspublications/GYTS%204%20Final%20Report.pdf>.

The Government has taken several measures to curb the prevalence of tobacco use among youth and make schools to tobacco free. Some of the key measures taken are given below:

- i. Government had released Guidelines for Tobacco-Free Educational Institutions (ToFEI) in 2008 and same was updated in 2019. It provides a structured guideline to make schools and colleges completely free from tobacco use and sale.
- ii. DoSEL had launched the implementation Manual of ToFEI on 31st May 2024. It aims to assist schools in adhering to the ToFEI guidelines, thereby creating a healthier, tobacco-free environment for students. The manual covering 9 activities to be taken up by the schools, empowers all the stakeholders to adopt and enforce guidelines that protect students from the dangers of tobacco.
- iii. A joint DO letter from Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL), Department of Higher Education and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare was issued on 18th September, 2024 to all States and UTs requesting to strictly implement ToFEI guidelines and various provisions of Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) 2003 (especially Section 6A and 6B).
- iv. In November 2024, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued an advisory to all States/UTs to strictly implement ToFEI and COTPA provisions.
- v. A national call for a month-long enforcement drive was issued by DoSEL on 19 May 2025, directing States/UTs to ensure areas around schools remain free from tobacco, alcohol, and drugs, through concrete measures for effective implementation of activities mentioned in ToFEI guidelines and the provisions of Sections 6A and 6B of COTPA, 2003. It was highlighted that, under the ToFEI guidelines, immediate action from local authorities is required on two key activities: Activity 8 – marking a yellow line 100 yards around educational institutions to designate a tobacco-free zone, and Activity 9 – ensuring that no shops or vendors sell tobacco products within that 100-yard zone.
- vi. The National Workshop on “Unmasking the Appeal: Exposing Industry Tactics on Tobacco and Nicotine Products,” was organized by DoSEL held on 31 May 2025 to strengthen awareness and promote the effective implementation of ToFEI guidelines. The workshop provided a common platform for officials and representatives from the Ministries of Health & Family Welfare and Home Affairs, Narcotics Control Bureau (NCrB), NCERT, CBSE, State/UT governments, civil society organizations, domain experts, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the National Service Scheme (NSS), and students from educational institutions. During the workshop, modules initiatives developed by NCERT such as the School Health Programme (SHP) and Manodarpan initiative were explained to the States. Several States/UTs presented their

best practices in the implementation of ToFEI which included translation of ToFEI guidelines into the regional language by Andhra Pradesh for wider reach, creation of a Live Organ Museum by Puducherry to educate students on tobacco's harms, and mobilization of students by Meghalaya through rallies, signature campaigns, and street plays for student led advocacy efforts. The best case studies from various States were shared with all stakeholders.

- vii. The World No Tobacco Day Awareness Quiz (with 10 questions) 2025 was launched on MyGov on 22 May, 2025. This initiative aims to foster awareness among school/college students about the harmful effects of tobacco and the deceptive marketing strategies used by the tobacco and nicotine industry. So far, the quiz has witnessed more than 69,000 participants.
- viii. 'The School Challenge: Towards a Tobacco-Free Generation' was launched by DoSEL on 11 June 2025 on the MyGov platform to spread awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco use. The Challenge comprises four activities—Rally, Nukkad Natak, Posters, and Slogans/Poems—which schools can use to mobilise local communities against tobacco consumption and promote the message: "Say NO to Tobacco, YES to Health." This initiative is aimed at inspiring students to become agents of change and catalysts for achieving a tobacco-free generation. As on 13.08.2025, more than 4,000 schools have participated in the School Challenge.

In addition to the above measures, the Government, in collaboration with NCERT, continuously conducts capacity-building programmes and awareness sessions for school heads across all States and UTs to spread awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco use, foster positive behavioral changes, and strengthen the implementation of ToFEI guidelines in schools.

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