

What about smokeless tobacco?

Smokeless tobacco products are sometimes promoted as if they were a healthier alternative to smoking. In fact, they have their own serious health risks.

Smokeless tobacco — chewing tobacco or snuff — has been linked to cancer of the lip and jaw. Its use irritates and stains the gums, discolors the teeth, and can cause tooth loss and receding gums. The nicotine absorbed into the blood stream has the same negative effects on the body as described above.

Spitting tobacco juice also stains clothing, is not hygienic, and is unattractive to most people.

Get ready to quit

You learned to smoke, and you can learn how to quit. First, understand your smoking habits. For one week, keep a diary of all the times you reach for a cigarette. Note how you felt, where you were, whether you enjoyed it or if you lit up out of pure habit. The following week, set some guidelines to break those habits. First, agree to wait for a few minutes before lighting up to see if you really need that cigarette. Then, agree not to smoke while doing other things (like talking on the phone, driving in the car, etc.).

Set a quit date

When you've decided to quit, set a date to stop smoking for good. Try not to pick a time when you know you'll be under excess stress — an important meeting, a houseful of guests, etc. It may help to stop smoking during a vacation or holiday. It's a natural break in your routine and may make your new habits easier to assume. Tell as many people as you can that you're quitting smoking and ask for their support. When "quit day" arrives, do something special to reward yourself.

Go "smoke free" for good

Many smokers can go without smoking for a day or more, but the challenge is to stay smoke free. Start by actively appreciating your new non-smoking behavior. Tell yourself daily how satisfied and good you feel. When you get the urge to smoke, call a friend or distract yourself with some form of physical activity. Drink plenty of water to flush nicotine from your system and practice deep-breathing techniques. Quitting smoking isn't impossible — as millions of former smokers will attest.

Help is available

Just talking about your problems sometimes leads to new solutions. If you or someone you know needs information, guidance or help, contact the resource and number listed below or look in the yellow pages for local professionals who can help.

WorkLife Solutions

Employee Assistance Program

(330) 965-1234

www.eap4me.com

Item #6015

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TOBACCO



How many people smoke cigarettes?

Some 55-60 million people smoke cigarettes in the United States. The numbers change from year to year, and some groups smoke more or less from survey to survey. Overall, however, the number of smokers has decreased in the past two decades — mostly as the result of public awareness that smoking or chewing tobacco can cause life-threatening illnesses. As the Surgeon General's Warning on cigarette packs says, "Smoking causes lung cancer, heart disease, emphysema and may complicate pregnancy."

What are the effects of smoking tobacco?

Nicotine, the active drug in tobacco, acts as a stimulant on the heart and nervous system. When tobacco smoke is inhaled, the immediate effects on the body are a faster heartbeat and elevated blood pressure. However, these effects go away quickly.

The tar found in cigarettes contains many cancer-causing compounds. Many of these carcinogens are also found in polluted air, but are present in vastly greater quantities in cigarette smoke. They are the major cause of cancer and other respiratory problems. Even relatively young smokers can develop shortness of breath, nagging cough or cardiovascular and respiratory difficulties.

The carbon monoxide found in cigarette smoke also causes serious health effects. Carbon monoxide reduces the blood's ability to carry oxygen to tissues. Over time, this can promote the development of arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries).

Long-term effects of smoking include emphysema, chronic bronchitis, heart disease, lung cancer and cancer in other parts of the body. Pipe smoking is related to cancer of the lip, and heavy pipe and cigar smokers are at increased risk of developing cancer of the mouth, larynx and esophagus.

Are there non-health effects of smoking?

Smoking makes the smoker's breath, clothes and hair smell smoky. Fingers and teeth become stained. Ashes and burn marks damage clothing and furniture, and smoke smells and stains affect rooms or areas where smoking takes place. Smoke damages audio, video, computer and other electronic equipment, resulting in inconvenience and the cost of cleaning and repair. In addition, there is the cost of the tobacco product itself.

What are the risks of smoking during pregnancy?

Women who smoke during pregnancy more frequently lose their babies through miscarriage and stillbirth or death soon after birth. They have a greater chance of premature birth and are more likely to have babies that weigh less than average, a sign of poor infant health. Smaller babies tend to require much more postnatal care.

Why do people smoke?

People smoke for many reasons. Young people model behavior they witness. They see adults smoking around them and in the media. Some may begin smoking to feel more grown up. Others say they start smoking to lose or maintain their weight.

Smokers give many reasons for continuing to smoke, but most regular smokers are dependent — addicted to nicotine — and continue to smoke to avoid withdrawal symptoms, as described below.

What does being dependent mean?

Medical research has confirmed the fact that nicotine is the most addictive of all psychoactive drugs. Most regular users become psychologically and physically dependent on cigarettes. They find it difficult to stop smoking and may try many times to kick the habit. Physical withdrawal from cigarettes is characterized

by irritability, restlessness, anxiety, insomnia and trembling.

When smokers indicate that smoking relaxes them, they are referring to the reduction in these withdrawal symptoms. Nicotine is a stimulant and does not cause relaxation.

What about the effects of smoking on nonsmokers?

Secondhand smoke can produce ill effects on nonsmokers, including eye irritation, headaches, nose and throat discomfort and serious allergic reactions. Those who suffer from chronic cardiovascular and pulmonary diseases are extremely vulnerable to cigarette smoke.

To protect citizens from these smoke effects, laws prohibit smoking in most public buildings and limit smoking in many other areas, including restaurants and food stores.

What do people think about smoking?

Ninety percent of Americans believe that smoking is hazardous to a person's health; 84% believe that something should be done about it. Most smokers know that smoking can cause disease and death and would like to quit.

If I smoke, how can I reduce the hazards?

- Try to quit and keep trying until you succeed.
- Smoke fewer cigarettes each day.
- Don't smoke the cigarette all the way to the end.
- Take fewer puffs on each cigarette.
- Reduce the amount of smoke you inhale.
- Limit the places that you smoke.