



KICKING THE SMOKING HABIT

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF SMOKING ON WOMEN?

In the short-term, smoking involves nicotine addiction, respiratory problems, coronary artery disease, dental problems, nervousness and depression, and a tendency toward health-damaging behavior. Most obvious are the immediate changes in quality of life: bad breath, wrinkled skin, and strained fingernails.

Smoking is also infamous for its long-term effects on health. Women who smoke have at least a 10 times greater likelihood of developing lung cancer than nonsmoking women; it even surpassed breast cancer as a cause of cancer deaths among American women. Tobacco use is a major risk factor for other cancers such as cervical and esophageal/throat cancers. A woman who smokes is two to six times more likely to suffer a heart attack than a non-smoking woman, and the risk increases with the number of cigarettes smoked each day and for young women who both smoke and use oral contraceptives. Smoking also boosts the risk of stroke and greatly increases the chances for infertility, complications during pregnancy, and an earlier onset of menopause and the development of osteoporosis. Tobacco use by pregnant women has been linked with increases risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and mental retardation; secondhand smoke worsens the health of children with asthma.

IS IT TOO LATE TO QUIT?

As hard as quitting may be, the results are well worth it. In the first year after stopping smoking, the risk of coronary heart disease in women drops sharply. It then gradually returns to "normal" -- that is, the same risk as someone who never smoked. So no matter what your age, quitting will lessen your chances of developing heart disease.

WHAT IS CORONARY HEART DISEASE?

Coronary heart disease is a woman's concern, every woman's concern. One in ten American women 45 to 64 years of age has some form of heart disease, and this increases to one in five women over 65. Another 1.6 million women have had a stroke. Both heart disease and stroke are known as cardiovascular diseases, which are serious disorders of the heart and blood vessel system.

Cigarette smoking is a habit that greatly increases your chances of developing cardiovascular diseases. Surprising as it may seem, smoking by women in this country causes almost as many deaths from heart disease as from lung cancer. If you smoke, you are two to six times more likely to suffer a heart attack than a nonsmoking woman, and the risk increases with the number of cigarettes you smoke each day. Smoking also boosts the risk of stroke.

There is simply no safe way to smoke. Although low-tar and low-nicotine cigarettes may reduce the lung cancer risk somewhat, they do not lessen the risks of heart diseases. The only safe and healthful course is not to smoke at all.

If you now use cigarettes, you can stop. There are as many ex-smokers in this country today as there are smokers. Becoming a successful ex-smoker is what this fact sheet is all about.

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT QUITTING

There is nothing easy about giving up cigarettes. But as hard as quitting may be, the results are well worth it. In the first year after stopping smoking, the risk of coronary heart disease drops sharply. It then gradually returns to "normal"--that is, the same risk as someone who never smoked. So no matter what your age, quitting will lessen your chances of developing heart disease.

Take some time to think about other benefits of being an ex-smoker. Check the reasons that apply to you in the box on page 2. Add any other reasons you think are important. This is an important first step in kicking the smoking habit figuring out for yourself what you have to gain.

Many women fear that if they stop smoking they will gain a lot of unwanted weight. But the average weight gain for ex-smokers is only about 5 pounds. Choosing more foods lower in calories and boosting your physical activity level will help prevent weight gain. And if you do gain more than a few pounds, you can work on losing them after you have become comfortable as a nonsmoker. When you think about the enormous health risks of smoking, the possibility of putting on a little extra weight is not a reason to continue smoking.

GETTING READY TO QUIT

WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND DEVELOPING A SMOKING CESSATION PLAN. There is an excellent **FREE** program sponsored through the state and paid for by tobacco companies. Contact them at:

co.quitnet.com or call **1-800-639-QUIT**.

Once you decide to stop smoking, you'll need to set a target date for quitting. Choose a time when you won't be under a lot of stress. To help you stick to your quit date, write "I will quit smoking on (fill in the date)" on a piece of paper and have someone sign it with you. Now you have a contract. Also list on your contract how you'll reward yourself for each week and month of not smoking.

Ask the person who cosigns your contract--or another friend or family member--to give you special support in your efforts to quit. Plan to talk with your supporter regularly to share your progress and to ask for encouragement. If possible, quit with a relative or friend.

BREAKING THE HABIT

Surviving "Day One." On the evening before your quit day, throw away all cigarettes, matches, lighters, and ashtrays. Plan some special activities for the next day to keep you busy, such as a long walk, a movie, or an outing with a friend. Ask family members and friends not to offer you cigarettes or to smoke in front of you. Your goal is to get through that first important day smoke-free--which will help you succeed on each day after that.

Know Yourself. To quit successfully, you need to know your smoking "triggers," which are situations and feelings that bring on the urge to light up. Common triggers are drinking coffee, finishing a meal, watching television, having an alcoholic drink, talking on the phone, watching someone else smoke, or being under stress. Make a list of your personal smoking triggers, and avoid as many as you can.

Find New Habits. Replace "triggers" with new activities that you don't associate with smoking. For example, if you always had a cigarette with a cup of coffee, switch to tea for a while. If you're feeling tense, try deep breathing to calm yourself. (Take a slow, deep breath, count to five, and release it. Repeat 10 times.)

Keep Busy. Get involved in projects that require you to use your hands, such as sewing, gardening, or jigsaw puzzles. Be as physically active as you can. When you feel the urge to put something in your mouth, have low-calorie substitutes ready, such as vegetable sticks, apple slices, or sugarless gum.

Know What To Expect. Shortly after quitting, you may experience headaches, irritability, tiredness, constipation, or trouble concentrating. While these symptoms are not pleasant, it is important to know that they are signs that your body is recovering from smoking. Most symptoms end within 2 to 4 weeks.

Two Things to Help You. Nicotine chewing gum and a nicotine patch are both available by prescription. The gum and the patch can be used for a limited time to help you stay off cigarettes by lessening your withdrawal symptoms. But nicotine gum and the nicotine patch are not for everyone. Pregnant women, nursing mothers, and people with serious heart problems cannot use them safely. Talk with your health professional first.

More Help Is Available. There are many free or low cost programs available to help you stop smoking. Check

The Women's HEALTH GROUP, P.C.



9195 Grant Street, Suite 410
Thornton, CO 80229
Phone: 303-280-2229(BABY)
Fax: 303-280-0765

300 Exempla Circle, Suite 470
Lafayette, CO 80026
303-665-6016
303-665-0121

6363 West 120th Avenue, Suite 300
Broomfield, CO 80020
303-460-7116
303-460-8204

www.whg-pc.com

with local chapters of the American Lung Association and the American Cancer Society, area hospitals, health maintenance organizations (HMOs), your workplace, and community groups with an interest in health.

Be Good To Yourself. Get plenty of rest, drink lots of fluids, and eat three balanced, healthful meals each day. If you are not as cheerful or energetic as usual during the first several weeks after quitting, don't feel guilty. You are making a major change in your life, and for that you deserve a lot of credit.

IF YOU "SLIP"

A "slip" means that you have had a small setback and smoked a cigarette after your quit date. Don't worry. Most smokers "slip" three to five times before they quit for good. But to get right back on the nonsmoker track, here are some tips:

Don't Get Discouraged. Having a cigarette or two doesn't mean you have failed. It doesn't mean you can't quit smoking. Keep thinking of yourself as a nonsmoker. You are one.

Learn From Experience. What was the trigger that made you light up? Were you having a drink at a party, or feeling angry at someone? Think back on the day's events until you can remember.

Take Charge. Make a list of things you will do the next time you are in that situation--and other tempting situations as well. Reread your list of all the reasons you want to quit. You're on your way.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you want to know more about keeping your heart healthy, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) has available free fact sheets on the following subjects: preventing high blood pressure, preventing high blood cholesterol, the heart benefits of physical activity, and heart disease risk factors for women.

Contact:

NHLBI Information Center
P.O. Box 30105
Bethesda, MD 20824-0105
(301) 251-1222

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National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

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Why I Want to Quit Smoking

- I will greatly lessen my chances of having a heart attack or stroke.
- I will greatly lessen my chances of getting lung cancer, emphysema, and other lung disease.
- I will have fewer colds or flu each year.
- I will have better smelling clothes, hair, breath, home, and car.
- I will climb stairs and walk without getting out of breath.
- I will have fewer wrinkles.
- I will be free of my morning cough.
- I will reduce the number of coughs, colds, and earaches my children will have.
- I will have more energy to pursue physical activities I enjoy
- I will have more control over my life.
- I will _____

Stopping Smoking's Triggers

You probably have certain situations and feelings that trigger your desire to smoke. Do you smoke while on the telephone? After having a meal or a drink? When you feel stressed?

To make stopping easier, find out what your triggers are and then come up with alternate behaviors. Have a slice of apple or a stick of sugar-free gum, for instance, rather than a cigarette. Use the space below to record when you feel the urge to smoke and what you might do instead:

Trigger Situation/Feeling

Alternate Behavior



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QUIT TIPS FOR SMOKERS

Throw out all cigarettes by breaking them in half and wetting them down. Clean out all ashtrays in your home, office, or car and throw them away. Discard matches and hide lighters.

When the urge to smoke hits, take a deep breath. Hold it for ten seconds, then release it slowly. Taking deep, rhythmic breaths is similar to smoking, but you inhale clean air, not poisonous gases.

Exercise to help relieve tension. Climb stairs rather than take the elevator, park the car a block or two from your destination and walk the rest of the way. At home, practice touching your toes, jog in place, do jumping jacks.

When tempted to reach a cigarette, think of a negative image about smoking. Select your worst memory connected with the habit--the time you burned a hole in your suit or when you were left completely breathless running for a bus that pulled away. Imagine this experience for 15 seconds whenever an urge occurs.

Reward yourself with oral substitutes in the same way you may have used cigarettes. Good examples: sugarless gum, lemon drops, pumpkin or sunflower seeds, apple slices, carrot sticks, unbuttered popcorn.

Eat three meals. This maintains constant blood sugar levels, thus preventing urges to smoke. Avoid sugar-laden foods and spicy items that can trigger a desire for cigarettes.

Scramble up your day and change habits connected with smoking. Drive a different route to work; eat lunch in a new place; leave the "scene of an urge." At home avoid your "smoking chair" after dinner, reach for gum rather than a cigarette when answering the phone.

Cleanse your body of nicotine. Drink liquids--lots of them. Water (6-8 glasses), herbal teas, fruit juices, and caffeinated soft drinks and alcohol increase your urge to smoke, so avoid them.

Keep your hands--and mind--busy. Work on a crossword puzzle, knit a sweater, balance your checkbook, fix something around the house, or shampoo the dog.

Spend your day with friends who don't smoke. Visit places where smoking is prohibited; a library, theater, department store, or museum. Travel in the "no smoking" car of the light rail.

Get rid of smoker's breath by brushing your teeth several times.

Go public with your plans to quit. Ask friends to help keep you from backsliding. Ask family and co-workers who smoke not to do so around you.

Pat yourself on the back. Quitting smoking is hard and you deserve credit for your efforts.

Treat your body and soul with kindness: indulge in a bath, massage, nap. Listen to your favorite music. Realize you don't need a cigarette to have a good time.