

## Smoking Cessation

The U.S. Surgeon General has said “Smoking cessation (stopping smoking) represents the single most important step that smokers can take to enhance the length and quality of their lives.” Quitting smoking isn’t easy, but **YOU CAN DO IT!**

Quitting smoking is difficult because of nicotine. Nicotine is a naturally occurring drug in tobacco. It can be as addictive as heroin or cocaine. Over time, a person becomes physically and emotionally dependent on nicotine. Studies have shown that smokers must deal with both physical and mental dependence to quit and remain smoke free.

When you inhale smoke, nicotine is carried deep into your lungs. There it is quickly absorbed into the bloodstream and carried throughout your body. Nicotine affects many parts of the body; including your heart, blood vessels, your hormones, the way your body uses food (your metabolism) and your brain. Besides causing **lung cancer** other forms of cancer are related to smoking such as **cancer of the mouth, voice box (larynx), throat (pharynx), esophagus, bladder, kidney, pancreas, cervix, and stomach**. In addition to cancer diagnoses statistics indicate that smoking increases your risk of getting lung diseases such as **emphysema, bronchitis, pneumonia, and COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease)**. Smokers are twice as likely to die from **heart attacks** as non-smokers. Smoking is also a major risk factor for **peripheral vascular** disease, a narrowing of the blood vessels that carry blood to the leg and arm muscles. Smoking also affects the walls of the vessels that carry blood to the brain (carotid arteries) which can cause **strokes**. Men who smoke are more likely to develop **erectile dysfunction (impotence)** because of blood vessel disease. In addition smoking also causes an increased risk of **macular degeneration**, one of the most common causes of blindness. It also produces **premature wrinkling of the skin, bad breathe, gum and tooth problems, bad smelling clothes and hair, and yellow fingernails**.

Half of all smokers who keep smoking will end up dying from a smoke-related illness. In the U.S. alone, smoking is responsible for nearly 1 in 5 deaths, and about 8.6 million people suffer from smoking-related lung and heart diseases. **Based on data collected in the late 1990’s, the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) estimated that adult male smokers lost an average of 13.2 years of life and female smokers lost 14.5 years of life because of smoking**. Among the diseases that smoking can cause, it can decrease your quality of life. In addition, smoking is expensive.

**Smoking not only harms your health but it hurts the health of those around you.** Exposure to secondhand smoke (also called environmental tobacco smoke or passive smoking) includes exhaled smoke as well as smoke from burning cigarettes. In the U.S. studies have shown that secondhand smoke is responsible for: an estimated 46,000 deaths from heart disease in non-smokers who live with smokers; about 3,400 lung cancer deaths in non-smoking adults; other breathing problems in non-smokers, including coughing, mucus, chest discomfort, and reduced lung function; 150,000 to 300,000 lung infections (such as pneumonia and bronchitis) in children younger than 18 months of age, which result in 7,500 to 15,000 hospitalizations annually; increases in the

number and severity of asthma attacks in about 200,000 to 1 million children who have asthma; and more than 750,000 middle ear infections in children.

There are a wide range of counseling services, self-help materials, and medicines available today, so smokers have more tools than ever to help them quit smoking. **Telephone counseling centers** are available today in all 50 states with trained counselors. **The American Cancer Society's Quit Line** is an example of such counseling services. In addition **(NRT) Nicotine Replacement Therapy** can help with the difficult withdrawal symptoms and cravings that 70-90% of smokers say is their only reason for not giving up cigarettes. The (FDA) Food and Drug Administration has approved 5 types of nicotine replacement therapy. **Nicotine patches** give a measured dose of nicotine through the skin. Patches can be bought with or without a prescription. **Nicotine gum** is a fast-acting form of replacement in which nicotine is taken through the mucus membrane of the mouth. You can buy it over the counter without a prescription. **Nicotine nasal spray** delivers nicotine to the bloodstream as it is quickly absorbed through the nose. It is available only by prescription. **Nicotine inhalers** are available only by prescription. **Nicotine lozenges** are over-the-counter and are the newest form of NRT on the market. All of these NRT are meant to be used for limited amounts of time as smoking is tapered down and eventually eliminated. **Bupropion (Zyban)** is a prescription anti-depressant in an extended release form that reduces symptoms of nicotine withdrawal. **Varenicline (Chantix)** is a newer prescription medicine developed to help people stop smoking. It works by interfering with the nicotine receptors in the brain. In addition **Hypnosis, Acupuncture, Cold laser therapy, Filters**, may be used to aid in smoking cessation.

There is no one right to quit smoking but here are 4 key elements in quitting with success: **Making the decision to quit, setting a quit date and choosing a quit plan, dealing with withdrawal, and staying quit (maintenance).**

Stress is often mentioned as one of the reasons smokers smoke or return to their previous smoking habits after quitting. Stress however is a part of everyone's life and finding alternative ways of handling stress is recommended. These behavior changes however do not come easy.

**Remember you too can quit smoking.** More than 48 million Americans have quit smoking for good. **Will you be the next success story?**

