

What you need to know about tobacco

SMOKING AND TOBACCO OVERVIEW

Whether you smoke it, chew it or inhale it second hand, the fact of the matter is: tobacco is bad for your health. It causes cancer, stroke, breathing problems, heart disease and more. So why do so many people put their lives at risk? The answer: a powerful little ingredient called nicotine.

Read on to learn more about this drug, and what else makes smoking and tobacco so dangerous.

WHY NICOTINE IS SO ADDICTING

With all that we know about the dangers of smoking, the lure to smoke again and again can be traced to one little, but lethal, drug: nicotine. With each puff, nicotine is unleashed into your blood and your brain — releasing a chemical called dopamine into the brain, which gives you pleasure.

Sounds harmless enough until the nicotine starts to wear off — only 40 minutes later from your last puff you'll start to feel anxious, even depressed. So in an effort to recreate the pleasure feelings, you smoke again. And again. Over time, your brain gets used to the nicotine that you need it just to have normal levels of dopamine in the brain. In effect, you've trained your brain to crave nicotine.

WHAT'S IN A CIGARETTE?

Tobacco doesn't taste good. That's why makers add hundreds of ingredients to enhance a cigarette's flavor, or make it more pleasant. Ammonia or bug spray anyone? You'd likely say "no thanks." But just one little cigarette has over 4,000 of these types of chemicals — at least 60 of them cancer causing. Here are some of the most common chemicals in a cigarette:

Chemical	Found in:
Arsenic	Rat poison
Tar	Material to make roads
Carbon monoxide	Car exhaust
Nicotine	Bug spray
Ammonia	Cleaning products
Hydrogen cyanide	Gas chamber poison
Acetone	Nail polish remover
Cyanide	Deadly poison
Butane	Cigarette lighter fluid
Formaldehyde	Used to preserve dead bodies

THE PATH OF THE PUFF

Tobacco doesn't just harm your lungs. When you smoke, it is quickly absorbed into your bloodstream, carrying harm to almost every system and organ in your body.

Some effects:

- **Respiratory system:** Irritation of trachea and larynx, risk of lung infection, damage to air sacs in lungs, swollen and narrowed airways, breathlessness and more.
- **Circulatory system:** Less oxygen in blood, less blood flow to fingers and toes, stickier blood more prone to clotting, tightening of blood vessels, raised blood pressure and heart and more.
- **Immune system:** Compromised immune system, higher chance of infections and longer time to get over illnesses
- **Musculoskeletal system:** Tightening of certain muscles and reduced bone density.
- **Reproductive system:**
 - > **For men:** Lower sperm count, reduced sperm mobility, changed hormone levels and impotence
 - > **For women:** Lower chance of fertility, irregular menstrual cycles, earlier menopause, cervical cancer risk and more.

BE WELL — One little cigarette has big dangers: over 4,000 chemicals and 60 cancer-causing agents.

SECONDHAND SMOKE

You weren't born with the desire to smoke — you learned it. But you likely didn't learn all of the bad effects, like secondhand smoke, before it became a habit.

Nonsmokers who breathe in tobacco smoke have the same health risk as smokers, since they are taking in nicotine and other toxic chemicals as well. So the more a non-smoker is exposed to smoke, the higher risk they have to develop conditions like:

- Heart disease
- Lung cancer
- Lung conditions
- Breathing problems
- Asthma attacks
- Ear infections (children)

Researchers are even pointing to a link between secondhand smoke and the development of breast cancer.

Know your risks, and commit to quit.
Resolution to make lifestyle changes, no matter how small, will make a big difference.

Sources:

Smoking and Tobacco Use . Developed through a partnership of The Ohio State University Medical Center Mount Carmel and OhioHealth, Columbus, Ohio. Available for use as a public service without copyright restrictions at www.healthinfotranslations.com.

Secondhand Smoke. Accessed September 18, 2009 at www.cancer.org.

The Dangers of Smoking Cigarettes for Smokers. Accessed September 18, 2009 at <http://healthliteracy.worlded.org/>

Smoking – effects on your body. Accessed September 18, 2009 at www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/

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IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO QUIT

If tobacco is so harmful, there's no use quitting, right? Wrong! Each hour, month and year you go smoke-free provides you with the gift of improved health. In fact, after five to 15 years of not smoking, you'll end up having the same level of health as people who have never smoked. Here are other big health benefits:

- Lower risk of heart disease
- Lower risk of stroke
- Lower risk of lung problems
- Lower risk of cancer
- Lower risk of blood vessel disease
- Lower risk of ulcers
- Lower risk of gum disease and dental problems
- Better chance of healthy babies (if you're pregnant)
- Less coughing, sinus infections and shortness of breath
- More energy
- Better skin tone

AETNA GLOBAL BENEFITS®

Smoke-free sites

Check out the following sites to help you stay informed — and smoke free

Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
www.cdc.gov/tobacco

National Cancer Institute (NCI)
www.nci.nih.gov

Nicotine Anonymous
www.nicotine-anonymous.org

Smoke Free
www.smokefree.gov

