

Smoking

Smoking increases your risk of developing chronic diseases and suffering a premature death. Smoking can shorten your life. It brings an early death to more than 400,000 people in the United States each year. Lifelong smokers have a 1 in 2 chance of dying from a smoking-related disease. Smoking doesn't just cut a few months off the end of your life. It reduces the life of the average smoker by 12 years. Smoking makes millions of Americans sick by causing heart disease.



If you have high blood pressure or high cholesterol (a fatty substance in the blood) and also smoke, you increase your chance of having a heart attack.

Smoking causes cancer of the lungs, mouth, larynx (voice box), and esophagus. It plays a role in cancer of the pancreas, kidney, bladder, and maybe the cervix in women. The chance of getting cancer grows as you smoke more cigarettes, smoke more years, or inhale deeply.

If you smoke, you are more likely than a nonsmoker to get the flu (influenza), pneumonia, or other infections that can interfere with your breathing (such as colds). Flu and pneumonia are very dangerous for older people.

What Smoking Does



Cigarette smoke damages your lungs and airways. Air passages swell and, over time, become filled with mucus. This can cause a cough that won't go away. Sometimes this leads to a lung disease called chronic bronchitis. If you keep smoking, normal breathing may become harder and harder as emphysema develops. In emphysema, airways become blocked as the tissue of your lungs undergoes changes that make getting enough oxygen difficult.

SAFESM TIP: Quit Smoking Today

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WHAT YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE YOUR RISK

What Happens to Your Body When You Quit Smoking

As soon as you stop smoking, your heart and circulatory system (the arteries and veins that blood flows through) start getting better. Your chance of heart attack, stroke, and other circulatory diseases begins to drop. The flow of blood to your hands and feet gets stronger. Your breathing may be more difficult in the first few weeks, but should become easier a few months after your last cigarette. Quitting smoking can't undo permanent lung damage. It may, however, help slow further damage to the lungs. Your chance of getting cancer from smoking also begins to shrink.

Benefits of Quitting

If you quit smoking, you are likely to add years to your life, breathe more easily, and have more energy. Food will taste better, and the sense of smell improves. You decrease your risk of cancer, heart attack, and lung disease, improve your blood circulation, and improve your home environment, making life healthier for your family and friends. You can eliminate the odor of smoke in your clothes and hair.

Over a million people break the smoking habit each year. It is **never** too late to quit.



Breaking the Habit

The first step is to make a firm decision to quit. There are organizations, doctors, and clinics offering stop-smoking programs. Many are listed in telephone books under headings such as "Smokers' Treatment and Information Centers".