



## Pick Your Path to Health

### Quit Smoking and Live to See Your Grandchildren

By now you have probably heard the statistics. More than 3,000 children begin smoking each day; more than 400,000 people die from smoking-related illnesses each year; more than \$200 billion is spent on smoking-related Federal government Medicare expenditures every decade. But, did you know that smoking is the number one preventable cause of death of women in the United States? Of the more than 140,000 women who die prematurely from tobacco related illnesses each year, 80 percent began smoking while they were teenagers.

### Gender Differences and Smoking

Smoking effects women differently than it effects men, and unfortunately women draw the short stick. Physiologically, women tend to be more susceptible to the addictive properties of nicotine and have a slower metabolic rate than men, allowing nicotine stay in their bodies longer. Also, women appear to be more at risk to the effects of tobacco carcinogens than are men. For instance, some studies have suggested that women who smoke have higher rates of lung cancer, although they smoke at the same rate as men.

Where does it all start? Smoking often starts during adolescence and unfortunately, cigarette use is becoming increasingly common among adolescent girls. In fact, approximately 1 in 5 teenage girls is now a smoker, and each day in the United States about 1,500 girls begin smoking.

### Why do Girls Smoke?

When most girls begin smoking, they are usually caught up in the moment, in the immediate experience of what appears to be a cool or glamorous behavior. They are not concerned with the powerfully addictive nature of nicotine, which, for some adolescents, takes hold after only a few cigarettes.

Some of the influencing factors related to smoking includes:

- Having friends who smoke. especially a
- Sensation seeking,

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| <p>best friend who smokes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental smoking, which tends to establish smoking as a normative behavior.</li> <li>• Low self-esteem, poor self-image, low perception of self-efficacy and susceptibility to peer pressure.</li> </ul> | <p>rebelliousness, and a sense of vulnerability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low knowledge level of the adverse effects of cigarette smoking.</li> <li>• Anxiety or depression.</li> </ul> |
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## **The Benefits of Quitting**

If you are a smoker or know someone who is, you should know that quitting smoking significantly improves health status in the years to come. According to research from the Surgeon General's office:

- Just 1 year after quitting smoking, the excess risk of heart disease caused by smoking is reduced by half; after 15 years of abstinence the risk is similar to that of people who have never smoked.
- In 5-15 years, the risk of stroke for ex-smokers is the same as those who have never smoked.
- Female quitters between 35 and 39 years of age add an average of 5 years to their lives; women who quit at ages 65-69 increase their life expectancy by 1 year.

## **Helpful Hints**

Let's be realistic, quitting smoking is tough (cigarettes are among the most addictive drugs there are), but each year some 1.3 million Americans stop the habit successfully. Many smokers supplement their efforts with the help of a smoking cessation program. Consider the options available to you, and take advantage of all the support you can find!

One of the hardest parts about quitting smoking is dealing with cravings. As awful as they are, cravings only last about 5 minutes. Consider these proven tactics for reducing cravings and staying cigarette-free:

- Replace smoking with other activities—keep your cravings at bay and your hands busy. Chew gum, snack on fruit, work on a puzzle, take up knitting. Anything to keep your hands and mind off smoking.
- Drink less caffeine—caffeine will only make your body (which is already suffering from nicotine withdrawal) more jittery and nervous.
- Take a nap—the more tired you are, the more likely you are to crave cigarettes.
- Talk to your doctor about nicotine replacement—there are many products available to help you beat your addiction to nicotine.
- Find support—talk to a friend or join a smoking cessation support group. Research tells us the more support you have, the more likely you'll reach your goal.

Remember—quitting cigarettes is one of the most important decisions you can make. Educating adolescent girls and encouraging them not to start smoking in the first place is another important action you can take. Call your doctor today to find the best prevention and intervention information for you and the ones you love.

For more information about smoking contact the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's, CDC, Office on Smoking and Health, OSH, and the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, NCCDPHP, Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/>. On this Web site you can find all of the Reports on Smoking and Health from the U.S. Surgeon General's Office.

*Pick Your Path to Health is a national public health campaign sponsored by the Office on Women's Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For other tips on improving your health, or for more information on the Pick Your Path to Health campaign, call 1-800-994-WOMAN or visit the National Women's Health Information Center at [www.4woman.gov](http://www.4woman.gov).*