

Joel's Reinforcement Library

NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

Medical Implications of Smoking

Some people who enroll in our program are not quite convinced that they really want to quit smoking. Others claim that they cannot even think of good reasons to quit. In fact, there are many good reasons. The most important one is to avoid the dangerous health effects of cigarette smoking.

Worldwide, over four million will die this year from cigarette smoking, while here in the U.S. smoking will claim over 440,000. That is more Americans than die from all accidents, infectious diseases, murders, suicides, diabetes, and cirrhosis combined. In fact, this is more than all of the Americans killed in World War II.

The disease most often associated with cigarette smoking is lung cancer. One hundred years ago, lung cancer was so uncommon that if a doctor ever saw a case of it he would have written it up in a medical journal. Even as recently as 1930 most doctors never came across a case of primary lung cancer. This disease, which 50 years ago was almost unheard of, is now the leading cause of cancer deaths in men and women.

Lung cancer accounts for one third of all cancer deaths of men. Lung cancer was once believed to be predominantly a disease of males. By the mid 1980's, lung cancer overtook breast cancer to become the number one cause of cancer deaths in women.

Over 85% of the people who die of lung cancer could avoid the disease completely if they just didn't smoke.

Besides the lungs, other sites where cigarettes exert a carcinogenic effect include: mouth, lip, tongue, larynx, pharynx, and esophagus. In addition, cigarettes contribute to cancers of the kidney, bladder, pancreas and stomach.

While most people associate smoking with cancer, even more people die from circulatory problems caused by cigarette smoking than from cancers caused from cigarettes. The effects on the circulatory system are both immediate and dangerous. Nicotine is a stimulant which raises the heart rate and blood pressure, constricts the arteries, and, in conjunction with carbon monoxide, causes atherosclerotic conditions

within the artery walls. This clogging process affects the heart as well as other sites of the body such as the brain or peripheral circulation in the extremities, sometimes resulting in gangrene and amputations. Over 200,000 of smoking related deaths are attributed to the combined effect of nicotine and carbon monoxide on the circulatory system.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, such as emphysema and chronic bronchitis, are major crippers caused by cigarette smoking. While emphysema is not as deadly as lung cancer, patients with it often envy patients with cancer. People with lung cancer will usually die within six months of diagnosis. Patients with advanced stages of emphysema are permanently crippled, but it may take years for them to die from it. In its later stages, emphysema is a living hell. As one of our popular panelists proclaims, "When I die, I'm going to die healthy!"

Some smokers come into our clinics wondering if they need to quit smoking. They claim to feel fine. No symptoms of any diseases are yet obvious. Even their doctors say they appear normal. Unfortunately, the first sign of some of the smoking related illnesses is sudden death. This is not a preferable time to consider smoking cessation. The best time to quit to maintain the optimal benefits from not smoking is when you are alive and relatively healthy. If you are off cigarettes now, stay off. Your risk of all of the smoking related illnesses will eventually drop down to that of a non-smoker. They can still happen, but it is much less likely. If you currently smoke you will destroy more tissue and cause more damage and irritation every day you smoke.

We only have one body and one life. Some people feel they should have a choice to do the most with the time they have, so they should eat, drink, smoke and be merry.

These people are partially correct. We should have the choice of what we can do to obtain the most fun and fulfilling life. But going through a long crippling period, followed by a long lingering death is not the best utilization of time. It is not fun.

Consider all of the risks in comparison to the momentary pleasures that some of your cigarettes may have brought you. Give yourself a chance for a long, productive and happy life.

When things get rough and you feel like you want a cigarette, just take it one day at a time. You can always go out and buy cigarettes tomorrow. You cannot go out and buy health. I guess that is why it is said that " The best things in life are free." In order to stay free - NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

Joel

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