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Hazards of Smoking

What are the risks of smoking to smokers?

Cigarette smoking is the greatest cause of preventable deaths in the US. On average, people who smoke die 5 to 10 years earlier than people who don't smoke.

Smoking increases the risk of many health problems:

- lung cancer (Most people who have lung cancer are smokers or people who live with smokers.)
- other lung diseases, such as emphysema
- heart disease
- stroke
- ulcers
- hip, wrist, and spinal fractures
- cervical cancer
- bladder cancer.

Smoking can make sleep disorders worse. Smokers also tend to get colds and other respiratory infections more often.

Smoking is especially harmful if you have:

- lung disease, such as asthma
- heart or blood vessel disease
- diabetes
- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol
- a family history of these problems.

The more cigarettes you smoke each day, the greater your risk of disease. Switching from cigarettes to a pipe or cigars may not lessen the risk of disease if you continue to inhale the smoke. Cigar and pipe smokers are at the same risk for cancers of the mouth, lip, larynx, and esophagus as cigarette smokers. Fortunately, if you stop smoking, many of these risks decrease.

What are the risks of smoking to nonsmokers?

Exposure to tobacco smoke is dangerous to children and other nonsmokers.

The term secondhand smoke is used for smoke breathed by nonsmokers. It is a mixture of the smoke given off by the burning end of a cigarette, pipe, or cigar and the smoke exhaled from the lungs of smokers. Being near someone who is smoking is called passive smoking. If you are regularly around someone who smokes at least a few cigarettes a day, your risks of medical problems are similar to the increased risks for smokers. A nonsmoker in a very smoky room for 1 hour with several smokers inhales as many bad chemicals as someone who has smoked 10 or more cigarettes.

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