

Kicking the Tobacco Habit

An estimated 70 percent of adult smokers report that they would like to quit completely.

And for good reason. Kicking the tobacco habit is one of the best things a smoker can do for themselves and their family. The risks of smoking are no secret. And they're serious. Smoking is the number one cause of preventable death in the United States today. Non-smokers who are around secondhand smoke have an increased risk for serious illness like bronchitis, asthma, heart disease and cancer.

The sooner you quit, the sooner your body will begin to recover. According to the 2004 Surgeon General Report, health benefits occur within the first 20 minutes of the last cigarette smoked and continue for years:

- Within 20 minutes of your last cigarette your heart rate and blood pressure drops and the temperature in your hands and feet increases to normal.
- Within 8 hours of your last cigarette the carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal.
- Within 24 hours of your last cigarette your chance of a heart attack decreases.
- At 2 weeks to 3 months after your last cigarette, your lung function improves, circulation improves.
- At 1 to 9 months after your last cigarette, your respiratory symptoms of coughing, wheezing, fatigue, shortness of breath decrease. Your respiratory system improves the ability to handle mucus and clean the lungs.
- At 1 year after your last cigarette, your chance of having a heart attack is cut in half.

In addition, kicking the tobacco habit reduces your risk of lung and other cancers, heart disease, stroke and peripheral vascular disease. You will also look and feel healthier, have

whiter teeth and fresher breath and an improved sense of taste and smell. And, you will save money. Here are a few suggestions to help you kick the tobacco habit:

- Get support from your health coach.
- Decide to quit.
- Educate yourself. Develop a strategy or a personal plan.
- Set the date. Get rid of the ashtrays, lighters, or spit cups.
- Enlist the support of others. Tell friends, family members, your doctor and dentist.
- Develop a list of reasons to quit that are important to you. Write these down and keep your list where you will see it.
- Change your routine to minimize activities and places you associate with smoking.
- Exercise, eat a balanced diet and get plenty of sleep.
- Keep your mouth busy—try sugarless gum.
- Learn from past quitting experiences.
- Speak with your doctor or dentist about medication approved for use in smoking cessation programs.
- Focus on one day (smoke free) at a time. Try breaking the day into segments.
- Don't let setbacks discourage you. Nicotine dependence is difficult to overcome, but building confidence will be the most important aspect of breaking this dependence.

References: www.cancer.org; www.lungusa.org; www.cdc.gov; www.americanheart.org; www.webmd.com

To speak with an EAP professional, please call: 800.327.2384

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