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# **The Reality of Smoking: What It Does To Your Body**

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Cancer Sticks and Coffin Nails: How to Keep Them from Killing You

A Look at Lung Cancer: Ready to Quit Smoking Yet?

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# The Reality of Smoking: What It Does To Your Body

## **Cancer: Your Wake-Up Call to Quit Smoking**

Most people know that cancer is associated with smoking. Unfortunately, many don't truly realize the increased risks and seriousness of this disease, let alone its preventability. Smoking is a toxin and, as such, it causes damage to every organ in the human body. Therefore, it has been connected to at least 10 different types of cancers, including pancreas, bladder, kidney, cervix, esophagus, larynx, lung, and stomach, and is responsible for approximately 30% of cancer deaths.

### **Lung Cancer**

Sadly, more than 154,000 Americans died in 2002 from lung cancer, making it the number one cause of cancer deaths for both men and women. Frighteningly, only 12-15% of patients who acquire lung cancer are currently being cured by cancer treatments, yet more than 90% of all cases of lung cancer are preventable because they are caused by smoking.

Symptoms of lung cancer include repeated attacks of bronchitis or pneumonia, coughing up blood, a nagging cough, loss of appetite, pain in the arm and chest, unexplained weight loss, wheezing, hoarseness, shortness of breath, and swelling of the face and arms.

### **Cancer of the Esophagus (Esophageal Cancer)**

The esophagus is a muscular tube that is responsible for transporting food from the mouth to the stomach. It occurs most often in men over 50 years old. There are two forms of cancer of the esophagus. One type, squamous cell cancer, is closely linked to smoking, as well as alcohol consumption.

Symptoms of squamous cancer of the esophagus include pain or difficulty when swallowing, pain behind the breastbone, weight loss, indigestion, heartburn, cough, and hoarseness.

### **Throat Cancer**

Throat cancer, also known as laryngeal cancer, vocal cord cancer, or cancer of the glottis, occurs when tumors form on the voice box, vocal chords, or other areas of the throat. Smokers are at a greater risk of developing throat cancer, and those who smoke and drink alcohol are at an even greater risk. Throat cancer occurs most often in adults over the age of 50. In addition, men are 10 times more likely to develop throat cancer than women.

Symptoms of throat cancer include a sore throat that does not go away after one to two weeks, even after the use of antibiotics. Hoarseness that persists for one to two weeks is another symptom. General difficulty swallowing, neck pain, unintentional weight loss, swelling in the neck, coughing up blood, and high pitched breathing sounds are other symptoms.

## **Bladder Cancer**

Bladder cancer generally occurs in the transitional cells of the bladder, which are the cells that line the bladder. Smoking cigarettes makes a person five times more likely to develop bladder cancer. In fact, up to 30% of women with bladder cancer and 50% of men are caused by smoking. By the nature of the cancer, bladder cancer spreads to nearby organs, including the vagina, uterus, ureter, prostate, and rectum. It is also capable of spreading to the pelvic lymph nodes, the bones, the lungs, and the liver.

Symptoms of bladder cancer include frequent urination, blood in the urine, painful urination, and urinary urgency. Those with bladder cancer may also experience bone pain or tenderness, urinary incontinence, anemia, abdominal pain, weight loss, and lethargy.

## **Stomach Cancer**

Stomach cancer, also known as gastric carcinoma, comes in a variety of forms. The most common form Adenocarcinoma is the most common type of cancer affecting the digestive tract in the world. It occurs most often in men over 40. Diagnosis of stomach cancer is often delayed because there are not early symptoms or because sufferers mistake it for other less serious disorders, such as a sense of fullness, bloating, or gas.

Symptoms of stomach cancer include difficulty swallowing, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, and feeling of fullness, abdominal pain, breath odor, excessive belching, excessive gas, weight loss, and a general decline in health.

## **Kidney Cancer**

Kidney cancer is also known as renal cancer, adenocarcinoma or renal cells, and hypernephroma. It affects approximately 3 in 10,000 people and 12,000 people die every year from the cancer. It is more common in men than and women, particularly affecting men over 55. A history of smoking dramatically increases the likelihood of developing kidney cancer. This cancer metastasizes, or spreads, very easily. It most often spreads to the lungs or to other organs. Sadly, nearly 1/3 of patients with kidney cancer have metastasized by the time it is diagnosed.

Symptoms of kidney cancer include abnormal urine color (such as rusty, dark, or brown), blood in the urine, back pain, weight loss, malnourished appearance, abdominal pain, enlargement of one testicle, and swelling of the abdomen.

## **Cancer Sticks and Coffin Nails: How to Keep Them from Killing You**

So you are huddled outside the nice warm building, in the freezing rain, while you are sucking on your cancer stick together with the other pariahs from the office. Later, at dinner with your significant other, you find yourself staring at your date from the outside of the restaurant as you are once again sucking on your coffin nail. Finally it hits you: smoking is not as cool anymore as it once was. As a matter of fact, the times of James Dean, the Marlboro cowboy,

and John Wayne are long since gone, and the era of the surgeon general has arrived. The latter has come up with some uncanny and disturbing information:

- Cigarette smoke is the leading cause of deadly lung cancer.
- Cigarette smoke contains a variety of carcinogens, which have the ability to form all kinds of cancers, such as cancer of the esophagus, bladder, and larynx.
- The new low tar cigarette you bought on New Year's Eve to placate the nagging feeling of guilt is basically worthless in your effort of not having the habit kill you. The risk reduction for lung cancer is negligible.
- Cigar smoke, pipe smoke, and chewing tobacco have their own hazards and may lead to cancers of the mouth and pharynx.
- Smokers are found to be in greater peril than their non-smoking counterparts when it came to suffering a post-operative infection or respiratory illness.

The only way to keep the cancer stick from finally killing you is to keep it out of your mouth and out of your life for good. Yet if, for whatever reason, you are determined to throw caution to the wind, and continue on your path of nicotine addiction, there are some caveats that may help you to stay a littler healthier a little longer:

For example, a rather disturbing study out of France suggests that beta-carotene supplements may quite possibly increase the risk of cancer development for smokers. The same is true for former smokers, as it appears that the intake of these supplements has been associated with higher instances of colorectal, thyroid and lung cancers. The researchers were very clear in stating that smokers should not stay away from beta-carotene rich fruits and vegetables, but only their supplement counterparts. Non-smokers will quite often take this supplement to prevent coronary heart disease and also atherosclerosis.

Smoking has been linked not only to various cancers, but also to the development of osteoporosis and bone fractures. In part, this is due to increasing a woman's risk to have an earlier onset of menopause, as well as the lack of estrogen production that goes along with that. Smokers and non-smokers alike need to ensure that they have a sufficient calcium and vitamin D intake to counteract this silent disease.

Food sources are best to begin the intake of the mineral and vitamin, but supplementation is a good idea all the way around. Smokers need to be especially alert for osteoporosis, and thus may need to discuss an increase in calcium supplementation with a physician.

Another study has shown that smokers show an alarming propensity for vitamin C deficiency, as well as a lower ratio of folic acid in their systems. Vitamin supplementation may help, but a diet rich in these substances is highly recommended. Because of the findings on beta-carotene, researchers are a bit hesitant to recommend vitamin supplements for smokers.

As you can see, smokers face a variety of health risks each day, yet some are more hidden, and may even come as a surprise in an individual who thought they were doing something good for

her or his body. If you are a smoker, please be sure to let your doctor know about the supplements you are taking. Further, if you are a smoker, please quit! The latter is the only way to keep the habit from killing you slowly and methodically.

Yes, we all know about Uncle Albert who smoked three packs a day and lived to be ninety years old, but let's face it, his story is an aberration, which is quite possibly the reason it is told over and over, and not the norm. The norms are hospital rooms filled with coughing and wheezing patients, underweight children, and the despair of nicotine addiction.

## **A Look at Lung Cancer: Ready to Quit Smoking Yet?**

Although smoking can cause many different physical ailments, one of the most serious diseases associated with tobacco use is lung cancer. Smoking causes 87 percent of all cases of lung cancer. The leading cause of cancer deaths in America, lung cancer costs more people their lives than prostate, colon, lymph, and breast cancer combined.

The risk of lung cancer increases the longer you smoke, and the more cigarettes you smoke regularly. However, if you quit smoking—even after many years—you can still greatly reduce your risk of lung cancer. Prevention of the disease is very important because lung cancer typically is not found until it has reached an advanced stage. The survival rate for lung cancer victims, although improving, is still below that of many other cancers.

The most common symptom of lung cancer is usually a cough. This cough is caused by a tumor blocking passage of air or irritating the airway lining. Other symptoms include coughing up blood, chest pain, a “smoker’s cough” that grows worse, repeated bouts of pneumonia or bronchitis, shortness of breath, fatigue, appetite and subsequent weight loss, or hoarseness lasting over two weeks. Sometimes, lung cancer spreads to other parts of the body (also called metastasizing), and may cause headaches or bone pain.

### **Background**

Human lungs are paired organs that occupy the majority of the chest cavity, located on either side of the heart. The left lung has two lobes and the right lung has three. The pleura, a thin membrane, cover the lungs. Likewise, airway and windpipe linings have surface cells (columnar epithelium) and glands that produce mucus and other fluids.

Air travels from the nose or mouth through the trachea, which separates into two bronchi that enter either lung. Within the lungs, the bronchi continue dividing into smaller tubules, the smallest of which is called the alveoli. Alveoli are grouped in clusters, or lobules, which are then grouped into lobes. An alveolus is surrounded by capillaries. Capillaries are part of the pulmonary blood vessels that connect the lungs to the heart. Blood flows through the capillaries, carbon dioxide is delivered into the alveoli, and oxygen is diffused in the bloodstream.

The columnar epithelium (airways and windpipe lining) in healthy lungs divide in an orderly, controlled manner. When a person has lung cancer, these cells continue to reproduce past the

point when new cells are needed. Lung cancer may take years to develop, but lung tissue may start to change immediately after being exposed to carcinogens in cigarette smoke.

Continued smoking means more exposure to carcinogens; normal cells become more damaged and may become cancerous. Because of the great reach of the lung's cells throughout the body, cancerous cells may spread throughout the body (metastasize) more easily.

## **Lung Cancer Causes and Types**

As previously mentioned, cigarette smoking is the number one cause of lung cancer. Exposure to secondhand smoke, asbestos and other industrial carcinogens, and high concentrations of radon are other potential causes of lung cancer. In particular, smokers who experience exposure to asbestos or radon are even more at risk for cancer than nonsmokers.

A cancer is named by the body part in which it originated. So even if a nonsmoker has cancer in the kidney that spreads (metastasizes) to the lungs, it is considered metastatic kidney cancer. Nonsmokers rarely get lung cancer, and smoking does not affect the spread of cancer from other body parts to the lungs.

Of cancers originating in the lungs, there are two main types: small cell and non-small cell. Small cell cancer afflicts smokers almost exclusively, and spreads early on during the course of the disease. This type of cancer is typically treated with chemotherapy and radiation, as surgery is generally not an option. However, the five-year survival rate is very low.

More than 75 percent of lung cancers are non-small cell. The four main types of non-small cell cancer are squamous cell carcinoma, adenocarcinoma, large cell carcinoma, and bronchoalveolar carcinoma. If caught early in the course of the disease, non-small cell cancer can often be surgically removed. Adenocarcinoma is common for nonsmokers and people exposed to secondhand smoke. On the other hand, bronchoalveolar carcinoma tends to occur more often in smokers and in more than one location simultaneously.

## **Conclusion**

Causing nearly 90 percent of lung cancer cases, smoking is by far the greatest risk factor for this disease. However a decade after quitting, your risk of lung cancer is reduced by one-third. Reducing the number of cigarettes smoked can also reduce the risk, although it is not nearly as effective as quitting entirely.

## **What Smoking Really Does to Your Body's Health?**

When someone smokes, their body becomes dependent on the nicotine in cigarettes, cigars, or pipe tobacco. Nicotine is a chemical that can have physical and mood-altering effects. Because these effects are pleasant in the short-term, this helps people become addicted. This addiction is also reinforced by the sometimes severe withdrawal symptoms associated with stopping use of nicotine.

However, even though withdrawal may be difficult, the use of tobacco and nicotine can cause numerous health problems. Although lung cancer may be one of the best known ailments associated with smoking, it also affects your heart, blood vessels, appearance, and senses, as well as fertility and childbirth.

## **Lungs**

Smoking causes 87 percent of lung cancers. In addition to lung cancer, smoking can also cause emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Smokers are up to 20 times more likely to get lung cancer—a likelihood that is affected by the length of time a person has smoked, and the number of cigarettes smoked on a daily basis. Someone who quits smoking, on the other hand, will lower their risk of lung cancer, although it will still be higher than that of a non-smoker. In addition, secondhand smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals—of which, more than 50 are known to cause cancer in people or animals.

## **Heart and Circulatory System**

The heart and circulatory system can also be under attack by smoking, since smoking can result in an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. The reason for this connection is unknown, but researchers believe the nicotine may cause adrenal glands to produce heart-stressing hormones that make blood pressure and heart rate rise. Additionally, the carbon monoxide in the smoke takes oxygen away from the heart and other organs. Smokers may also be at a greater risk of heart attack or stroke, since smoking causes blood vessels to constrict.

## **Cancer**

As mentioned in reference to the lungs, smoking is the main cause of lung cancer. However, it is also a major cause of cancer in the esophagus, larynx, throat, and mouth. Smoking can also contribute to cancer in the bladder, pancreas, liver, kidney, cervix, stomach, colon and rectum. Finally, smoking may also be partially responsible for some leukemia.

## **Appearance**

Smoke ravages a person's appearance and makes him or her look years past their age. Skin is greatly affected by smoking. The skin becomes starved of oxygen, which makes it look dry, irritated, and prematurely wrinkled—particularly around the mouth and eyes. It can also cause stained teeth, fingers, and fingernails. Smokers may have bad breath, gum disease, and bad-smelling clothes and hair.

## **Fertility**

Smoking negatively impacts the fertility of men and women. Women smokers may experience increases risks of infertility and miscarriage, while men risk infertility and impotence because of damaged blood vessels in the penis. Smoking can also affect sperm quality and density, as smokers may produce less sperm and sperm with more abnormalities. If women smokers do conceive, it usually takes longer and they are more likely candidates for a miscarriage.

## **Pregnancy and Newborn Complications**

Even after successful conception, smoking parents will still have difficulties. Mothers who smoke during pregnancy risk low birth weight, premature delivery, and impaired lung function in their babies. Babies with mothers who smoke are also more likely to be stillborn, die shortly after birth, or die from cot death. Within the first year of life, babies with smoker parents are more likely to contract pneumonia and bronchitis. They have a higher risk of suffering from frequent, severe asthma attacks, and are more likely to become regular smokers as they grow up.

## **Senses**

When you smoke, your senses of taste and smell are deadened. Food is not as appetizing and you become unaware of perfume or scented candles. In addition, a smoker doesn't notice the smell given off by her own clothes and hair, which can be very unappealing.

## **Conclusion**

Smoking affects more than just your lungs. It affects your entire body—and those of the people who inhale secondhand smoke. By quitting smoking, you can reverse many of the effects mentioned above. Even if the risks of smoking cannot be completely erased, by quitting you can reduce them as much as possible and return your body to a happy, healthy state.

## **Seven Illnesses Attributed to Smoking**

Health reasons are often the number one reason people give for wanting to quit smoking – and it is certainly the best reason. In fact, smoking causes a wide variety of illnesses to basically every part of the body. In addition, there are nearly 440,000 cigarette related deaths in the United States every year – more than car accidents, alcohol, AIDS, suicide, illegal drugs, and homicide combined.

## **Respiratory Diseases**

Smoking actually causes many different types of lung diseases, such as lung cancer, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis. Emphysema and chronic bronchitis are often also experienced together and thus grouped under the term chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD. This disease is often diagnosed in both current and former smokers in their 60's or 70's. COPD, which is a chronic illness, eventually results in death for anyone who suffers from it.

Separately, chronic bronchitis and emphysema are serious diseases, as well. Chronic bronchitis is a disease that causes the airways to produce excess mucus. This is what forces a smoker to cough more often. Emphysema, on the other hand, slowly makes it impossible for the smoker to breath. This is because oxygen must move across the lungs in order to reach the blood. Tiny sacs within the lungs are responsible for making this happen.

With emphysema, these sacs break down and make it more difficult for oxygen to reach the blood. Ultimately, the person with emphysema is unable to breathe and needs to breathe with the assistance of oxygen.

More than 7 million smokers and former smokers have been diagnosed with COPD. Those suffering from the disease have a miserable deterioration. In the final stages, patients feel as if they are continuously gasping for breath, as if they were drowning.

### **Circulatory Diseases**

Smoking takes its toll on the heart. In fact, smokers are two times as likely to die from a heart attack as nonsmokers. Frighteningly, smokers are also more likely to die within an hour after having a heart attack than a person who does not smoke. In addition, smoking leads to peripheral vascular disease, which is the narrowing of the blood vessels responsible for carrying blood to the leg and arm muscles. Smoking is also a risk factor for heart disease, which is the number one cause of both men and women in the United States.

Women who use oral contraceptives are at particular risk for circulatory diseases. In fact, those who use oral contraceptives that are over 35 are in the high-risk group for heart attack and blood clots in the legs.

### **Cancer**

Smoking is accountable for at least 30% of deaths related to cancer. The most common forms of cancer associated with smoking are cancers of the larynx (voice box), lungs, pharynx (throat), oral cavity, and esophagus. In addition, smoking has been linked to the development of cancer in the pancreas, bladder, uterine cervix, liver, stomach, kidney, rectum, and colon. It has also been connected to some forms of leukemia. Cancer is responsible for about half of cigarette related deaths.

### **Stroke**

Smoking is a risk factor for stroke, which often results in mild or severe disabilities, or even death. In fact, 11% of deaths caused by stroke are from smoking cigarettes. Those who quit smoking reduce their risk of stroke significantly. After 5 years of smoking cessation, the risks are the same as those of a nonsmoker. Women who take oral contraceptives and smoke are at a particular high risk of having a stroke. A study at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School in Boston also found that male smokers who smoke less than 20 cigarettes per day are 1.7 times more likely to have a stroke than a nonsmoker. Those who have more than 20 cigarettes a day are 2.4 times more likely.

### **Skin Damage**

Smoking also causes damage to the skin, which is more serious than just the way it looks. In fact, smoking constricts blood vessels, which cuts off the blood supply to the top layer of the skin. Researchers believe smoking also damages genetic material in skin cells and accelerates the aging process. In addition, it causes skin to thin – perhaps by as much as 40% - and to become less porous.

## **Miscarriage and Pregnancy Complications**

Research has shown that women who smoke are more likely to have a low birth weight baby and to have a miscarriage than women who don't smoke. Women who smoke are also more likely to have a premature delivery, or to have a stillbirth baby.

## **Sexual Function**

Because cigarette smoking results in a decrease in blood flow, another side effect of smoking is impotence in men. With the blood unable to properly flow to the penis, it is difficult to get it erect and to maintain an erection.

All in all, people who smoke cut years from their lifespan because of the resulting diseases. In fact, the US Centers for Disease Control has stated male smokers lose an average of 13.2 years and female smokers lose an average of 14.5.

## **Sex-Ed: Effects of Prolonged Smoking on Your Sex Life**

For both men and women, smoking for long periods of time will cause your sex life to be less enjoyable, eventually causing many problems with your sex life and experiences. The chemicals that move through the blood stream eventually moves through ones body when they are smoking. This causes the blood flow and hormones to change. This doesn't change the sex life of your partner for the better, but rather, prevents them from enjoying sex as much as possible. It may also cause problems if you are trying to become pregnant or are already pregnant.

For men, smoking can cause several problems with sex. One of the major problems attributed with smoking is erectile dysfunction, also known as ED. Through smoking, men have more problems with erection or with completing intercourse. This is because of the higher blood pressure that smoking causes. The circulation in a man's blood stream is not moving at a normal pace, but is much higher. Because of this, it causes a narrowing of blood vessels in the pelvic area and reduces the blood flow. By smoking, the chemicals in your blood stream will cause a change in your body's functioning, eventually causing a change in your sex life.

Women may have the same problems with sexual factors if they are smoking. Smoking causes the hormones in the blood stream to function at a much lower level than normal. Because of the uneven flow of hormones and cardiovascular functioning, women will have a slower response time when having sex.

Another problem that may occur when a woman smokes in relation to her sex life is through the use of oral contraceptives or other methods of birth control. If you are taking some type of contraceptive and also smoke, it will cause problems related to cardiovascular diseases. This is because the hormones from the contraceptives cause a change in women's blood pressure.

This will react not only to the woman's body, but will also react to the extra chemicals that are in a woman's body from the smoking. This includes things such as blood clots, heart attacks

and strokes. This is then also increased through the smoking, causing a high risk for disease among women.

If you are trying to become pregnant, smoking has shown to cause prevention for women to conceive, as well as cause problems with infertility. The first reason for this is because of the slower response time from the woman. Another reason why it is harder for a woman to become pregnant is because of the chemicals that are found in cigarettes. This changes the cervical fluid in a woman's body, causing it to become toxic. If a man smokes, the chances of a woman becoming pregnant also remain low. The same toxic chemicals can move into a man's sperm, causing gene mutations, miscarriage, birth defects, cancer, or other problems from a child. It may also prevent the woman from becoming pregnant.

If a woman is pregnant and smokes, there are several risks that she is taking. Cigarettes are filled with several chemicals that are bad for the health of the child. The chemicals in this tobacco are passed from the mother to the fetus. Smoking can cause premature birth, miscarriage, and other problems with the unborn child. Nicotine levels in a born child are often high when they are born, causing withdrawal symptoms to occur for a period of time after they are born. This may cause sickness from the newborn baby to occur more than expected.

While smoking is often attributed with a better sex life, in reality, it can become detrimental to your sex life in many ways. This is something that can be seen through the changes that occur from smoking in both men and women. Hormone changes and shifts in blood flow are two of the major changes that happen when smoking. If you are trying to become pregnant, or are already pregnant, smoking can cause severe problems to your unborn child.

By stopping your smoking habit, you will allow a normalized pace of your blood circulation. This will allow a more fulfilling experience for both you and your partner. Quitting your smoking habit will also allow better chances for pregnancy or for your child.

## **Six Health Risks Thanks to Your Smoking Habit**

By smoking, you are putting yourself at several health risks. Cigarettes contain several different toxins and chemicals that move throughout your body, leading to different types of problems. These vary from mild problems to severe health risks that may even lead to death. Following, are six of several health risks that are probable in relation to smoking.

**1. Leukemia.** This is a type of bone marrow disease that happens with an increase in white blood cells. Usually, this happens because the white blood cells are unable to be controlled. Leukemia is further exposed to be able to form in your body when you smoke. This is because of the chemical used in cigarettes known as benzene. This is a leukemogen that adds to the white blood cells being uncontrolled.

**2. Weakened immune system.** If you smoke, you are more likely to become sick more often, and can produce fatal diseases easier. Colds, the flu, pneumonia, bronchitis, etc. are some of the different symptoms that you will be more exposed to. The cigarettes chemicals move into the immune system and replace the toxins that are used to fight off diseases with

the chemicals in the cigarettes. At first, this will cause you to become sick more often, but after a long period of smoking, it may lead to chronic illnesses that can weaken your system or cause death.

**3. Osteoporosis.** This is a symptom where your bones become weak, especially in the hip area. This begins because the smoke causes damage to nerve endings and tissue. This causes a lower level of blood to move into the bones, eventually not allowing the right nutrients to move into the bone areas. If you have an injury with a bone and smoke, it will take a longer time for it to heal as well. Eventually, this leads to lower bone density, which causes osteoporosis later on in your life.

**4. Premature aging and wrinkles.** The smoke and the tar that are in cigarettes take away the nutrients and oxygen that are needed for your skin to remain healthy. This includes weakening the collagen and fibers that are needed for healthy skin. These fibers are what give your skin strength and flexibility. It then replaces this with the radicals and chemicals that are in cigarette smoke. Smoke also causes the blood vessels in your skin to slow down. This takes away essential nutrients that the skin needs in order to remain healthy, such as vitamin A.

**5. Asthma.** Asthma is a lung disease that occurs because the lungs are unable to receive a sufficient amount of oxygen and carbon dioxide. This happens because the airflow to the lungs is blocked off. This then causes swelling of the air tubes, making it more difficult for air to move through. Asthma is often related to the symptoms of shortness of breath, a tight chest, coughing and wheezing. In smoking, asthma is often one of the results. This begins because the toxins and chemicals from smoking narrow the airways to your lungs and through the blood stream. Because of the toxins in the cigarette smoke, your lungs will respond by trying to create larger air sacs. This begins severe problems with breathing because the oxygen and carbon dioxide are blocked off from the normal airflow.

**6. Altered Brain Chemistry.** This includes things such as addiction and withdrawal symptoms, anxiety and other imbalances in your brain. This mainly occurs because of the nicotine contained in cigarettes. This nicotine is used as an addictive advice. It allows a smoker to believe that cigarettes allow them to feel good, relax, and calm their nerves. The nicotine moves into the brain and affects the natural system of chemicals that are used to calm painful situations. These chemicals are then consistently in need of being triggered by the nicotine. When this constant feeling of relaxation and feeling good is not noticeable, it causes a smoker to have withdrawal symptoms and addicting habits.

Smoking can cause several different types of symptoms, all leading to poor health. The toxins and chemicals that are used in smoking cause your body to move into a state of being constantly unhealthy, eventually leading to more severe problems. By smoking, you are affecting every part of your body's health.

### **Quit Smoking and Raise Your Life Expectancy**

Smoking is not only continuously bad for your health, but also lowers your life expectancy. Every time you smoke a cigarette, it changes the way that your body functions. This includes

the cardiovascular system, lungs, and other important parts of your body that help you to remain healthy. The outcome of smoking can become fatal because of the chemicals you are putting in your system. By deciding to quit smoking, you will raise your life expectancy from the diseases that the toxins from cigarettes cause.

One of the problems that smoking causes is cancer. It is known that smoking is responsible for 30% of the deaths that are related to cancer in the United States. These cancers include lung, larynx, oral cavity, esophagus, kidney, pancreatic, cervical and bladder cancers. The reason why smoking causes so much cancer is because of the chemicals that are found in smoking. There are over sixty kinds of substances in cigarettes that relate directly to cancer causing problems. Carbon monoxide, tar, arsenic, and lead are some of the main ingredients found in cigarettes that add to the problems with the development of cancer in someone who smokes.

Another one of the major problems that are caused through smoking which become fatal is heart disease. Some of the different types of heart disease include high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, stroke and heart failure. This occurs because the toxins from cigarettes move through your body, eventually breaking off normal functioning parts of your system. For example, in your arteries, plaques will begin to form from the chemicals taking over your system.

These same toxins begin to move from your blood stream which narrows the blood vessels. These blood vessels are the ones that supply blood and oxygen to your heart. If they become too narrow, it causes the supply to cut off completely, which can be fatal. These different kinds of heart diseases are the number one cause of death in the United States, and are often attributed with smoking.

Lung disease is another one of the common problems that can lower your life expectancy that is often attributed to smoking. Two of the largest types of lung diseases caused by smoking are emphysema and bronchitis. Emphysema is caused by the air sacs in the lungs to become damaged. These air sacs are responsible for the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide. The chemicals that are in cigarettes move into the lungs, damaging the walls of the alveoli.

This then causes the sacs to become larger and less effective in exchange the right types of air that the lungs need. They are known to be weaker, collapse, and trap the air that you need, and don't allow the lungs to properly inflate. At first, the symptoms of this lung disease are breathlessness. However, if you continue to smoke, it will continue to break down the air sacs, eventually leaving you unable to breathe. Bronchitis is caused from similar problems, by changing the structure of the lungs, which impairs the air flow.

Your life expectancy will slowly begin to expand when you quit smoking. This is in relation to how long you have smoked, how much you have smoked, when you began smoking and whether you were sick when you decided to quit smoking. The sooner that you decide to quit smoking, the more likely you will be able to prolong your life expectancy.

Eventually, the chemicals that have moved through your body will be removed from your system. This will allow the normal body functions to be able to move properly. It will also allow the chemicals that once prevented growth of tissue and nerves to begin to grow back. Your immune system, in return, will be able to produce more efficiently, allowing you to fight

off diseases.

When you decide to quit smoking, the lungs will begin to move air through them easier, and eventually replace the air sacs back to the normal size. It will also cause the blood vessels to stop narrowing, and sometimes expand back to normal. It is known that even twenty-four hours after you decide to quit smoking, your cardiovascular system begins to move at a normal pace, instead of the faster pace it had to move because of the extra chemicals in your system.

By removing the chemicals from your body by deciding to quit smoking, you are allowing yourself to prolong your life as well as be healthier in your activities. Smoking has proven to be fatal for several different reasons. The only way to change your life expectancy is to allow yourself to quit smoking.

### **Quit Smoking and Watch Your Social Life Soar**

You may not realize it, but smoking affects your social life as well as your physical wellbeing. How often have you avoided going places because they were non-smoking, or ducked out of a party at the height of the action to satisfy your nicotine cravings?

When you quit smoking, you can also increase your confidence, meet new people, and join new activities. An improved social life is just one more reason to quit smoking!

#### **Gain confidence.**

Smokers become addicted to the nicotine in cigarettes and tobacco. Cigarettes, cigars, and pipes all emit smoke that holds thousands of other chemicals, in addition to the nicotine. When a person's body becomes addicted to nicotine, the chemical temporarily creates pleasant physical and mental effects, which keeps the smoker coming back time and again.

When you successfully quit smoking, you overcome this physical and mental addiction. Overcoming such a powerful addiction is no easy task. Once you've accomplished it, you'll have more confidence to face other difficult tasks in your life, armed with the knowledge that you have succeeded at one of the most challenging hurdles many people encounter. If you can quit smoking, what is there that you can't accomplish?

#### **Meet others trying to quit.**

Hopefully your family and friends will be supportive of your efforts to quit smoking. However, no one can truly empathize with you except someone that is going through the same trials and tribulations. Join an online or local community that offers support to people who are quitting smoking.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) offers phone counseling at 1-800-QUIT-NOW. WhyQuit offers discussion groups for both first-time quitters and ones that have tried before. WhyQuit focuses on abrupt nicotine cessation (as opposed to smoking cessation with a gradual decrease in nicotine intake).

Many forums are geared toward quitting with the aid of a specific medication. However, forums that are more general include:

American Lung Association's Freedom from Smoking® offers modules to walk a quitter through the process and associated message boards.

The Quit Smoking Company's message boards are visually sparse, but offer visitors many opportunities for discussion with others trying to quit.

Quit Smoking Support has been helping smokers quit for over nine years through peer-to-peer support and encouragement.

To meet people in your local area and have a face-to-face discussion on quitting smoking, visit Nicotine Anonymous, Smart Recovery, or check with your insurance and health providers. Get more support for your efforts, and make new friends!

### **Learn new activities.**

Many experts recommend taking up new activities to fill up your time and keep you from thinking about smoking. As your health improves, you can join a local gym, recreational sports league, or take fitness classes.

To keep their hands busy and away from cigarettes, some people take up hobbies like knitting, crocheting, or doing puzzles. What will you do with your new energy and time? The possibilities are endless!

### **Get out of the house.**

When first quitting, smokers are often urged to spend a lot of time in public places where smoking is prohibited, such as libraries, malls, theatres, or museums. Revel in the fact that you can stay inside as long as you like—no need to run outside and satisfy a nicotine craving!

Make a point to meet friends and families for dinner at non-smoking restaurants that you may have avoided in the past. As the amount of time since your last cigarette increases, your sense of taste will improve and you can enjoy the food more.

### **Enjoy your financial freedom.**

A big part of quitting smoking is giving yourself rewards when you reach an important goal, whether it's going a day without smoking or six months. How can you reward yourself?

Tally up all of the money that you would be spending on cigarettes and think of ways to spend it. You can save up for a big trip or larger purchase, or spend it on weekly social activities like dining out, going to the theatre, or taking hobby or fitness classes. Use your extra money to improve your social life and reward yourself for resisting the temptation to buy another pack of cigarettes.

When someone quits smoking, their physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing all improve dramatically. Quitting smoking can take your social life to new heights since you'll have time and money for new hobbies, and will be able to venture out in public without fear of finding someplace to smoke your next cigarette. Once you've quit smoking, your social life will be on fire!

## **Quit Smoking and Take a Deep Breath**

It's true: quitting smoking is probably one of the hardest things you will ever do. But it's also one of the most beneficial things you will ever do for your health, and the health of those around you. With the advent of so many new products and supplements designed to aid smoking cessation, many smokers interested in quitting often overlook the importance of learning basic relaxation skills that can help even the most hardened smoker quit successfully.

The most important relaxation technique that you should learn if you are trying to quit is deep breathing. Many lifelong smokers are actually quite adept at deep breathing, if only by accident. Whether conscious of it or not, many smokers take deep drags off their cigarettes, producing a temporary sense of deep relaxation. Many individuals who attempt to quit smoking usually stop taking regular deep breaths, resulting in much of the stress, tension, and general restlessness that is characteristic of trying to quit.

If you've decided to give your body a break and quit smoking, here are some guidelines to avoid shallow breathing, and to help you relieve stress through the regular practice of deep breathing. For maximum effect, you should practice deep breathing whenever the urge to light up hits, or whenever you are feeling particularly stressed out. You should always attempt to breathe through your nose, as this is the healthiest way to bring oxygen into your body.

Try to find a quiet place conducive to relaxation.

Deep breathing is accomplished using the stomach muscles. Place your hand gently over your stomach's abdomen muscles.

Close your eyes and try to imagine a relaxing landscape or scene.

Breathe in deeply. Visualize the air entering your mouth, traveling into your lungs, and then filling your stomach, as if it were a balloon.

Slowly release the air and let your stomach return to its natural position.

Before you release each deep breath of air, hold the breath for as long as it's comfortable, and then release it slowly.

If you find it helps, focus on a calming phrase such as "This urge will pass," "I am relaxed," or whatever you find helpful.

Try to condition yourself so that whenever you feel the urge to smoke, you automatically retreat to your deep breathing exercises.

Along with deep breathing, you may want to incorporate different exercises to bring consciousness to your state of mind when you're desperate for a cigarette. Like the primary deep breathing exercise, these exercises can be done at any time or place, but preferably in a quiet, dark location where you can really focus on your breathing.

Sit cross-legged in a quiet location. Close your eyes and take a deep breath to calm your body and prepare for the following exercises.

Focus attention on your head, then your face, and finally, concentrate on your forehead. As you exhale, let the muscles in your forehead and temples relax.

Focus attention on your eyes. Let them soften and relax as you exhale.

Bring attention to your cheek muscles and jaw. Like your eyes, let them soften as you exhale.

Now, your neck. Whether you are conscious of it or not, your neck is a reservoir of tension. Whenever you feel stressed or worried, you will find that your neck becomes still and inflexible. Let the tension in your neck relax as you exhale. Imagine your neck muscles as malleable and flexible.

Continue to take deep slow breathes, pausing, and then exhaling slowly. Move your focus down to your shoulders. Like your neck, your shoulders will often store tension. Let them droop and relax as you exhale.

Move down to your stomach. When you breathe in, imagine the air entering your nose, traveling to your larynx, your lungs, all the way to the pit of your stomach. As you exhale, let the tension in your stomach melt away.

After you have finished meditating on different parts of your body, finish your deep breathing practice by taking a number of deep slow breaths, holding the breath for five seconds, and then releasing it.

When you're done, open your eyes, stretch your arms and legs, and get up slowly and deliberately.

Learning to breathe in this fashion is one of the best things you can do for your health, and one of the easiest, most effective ways to ward off the stress of kicking your smoking habit.

### **Smoking and Birth Control Pills Don't Mix**

Although the risks of smoking and taking birth control pills have been well documented for several years, many women are still unaware of how lethal the combination can really be. Here are eight things you should know about the dangers of smoking while taking birth control pills.

Even if you are not taking any kind of contraceptives, one thing is clear: the best way to protect all aspects of your health is to refrain from smoking.

1) Smoking while taking birth control pills is one of the worst things you can do for your heart health. Smoking, while taking birth control pills, can increase your risk of a heart attack dramatically. The more you smoke, and the older you are, the higher the risk. In fact, a recent study found that women over the age of 35 years who smoke 25 or more cigarettes a day have a 30 times higher risk of experiencing a first time heart attack!

The risk of smoking while taking a daily birth control is so well documented and so elevated, that your doctor or gynecologist may refuse to prescribe you birth control pills if you are a over 35 and a smoker because of the potential damage to your cardiovascular health.

2) Many doctors recommend that women over 35 who are taking a daily low-dose birth control pill also refrain from using nicotine patch or nicotine gum products. Even though the patch and nicotine gum products are much safer than smoking, they can still present a threat to women who have high blood pressure, or who are diabetic or overweight.

3) Heart attacks aren't the only potential dangers that have been identified with smoking heavily while taking birth control medications. The chance of suffering from blood clots or a stroke also rise significantly as a woman ages, especially if she is a heavy smoker who regularly takes birth control pills. Women who smoke while taking birth control medications also risk developing high blood pressure.

4) Women who smoke heavily and take birth control pills are more likely to suffer from adverse side effects. Most prescription drugs harbor some kind of side effect. The chances of experiencing side effects from your birth control medications may increase if you are regular or heavy smoker.

5) Smoking can be harmful to your reproductive health. If, like many women, you decide to discontinue use of your birth control pills to try to conceive, you may experience difficulty in getting pregnant. Research has shown that women who smoke regularly can take considerably longer to conceive than non-smokers. In one study, women who smoked 16 to 20 cigarettes each day were 20% less likely to conceive and give birth within their first year of trying. If you are trying to conceive, quitting smoking may be the best things you can due to increase fertility.

6) Smoking can increase your chances of having a difficult pregnancy. Besides hindering your ability to conceive, smoking dramatically increases your chances of having a difficult pregnancy. While smoking is obviously harmful to the fetus, smoking can also cause spontaneous abortions or a stillbirth. Some studies have even found that women who smoke heavily deliver infants who are at a 25% higher risk of dying shortly after birth.

7) Besides the potential harm to your cardiovascular health, smoking while taking conventional low-dose daily birth control medications has also been linked with a significantly increased risk of developing gallbladder disease, vision problems, and liver tumors.

8) What about the "patch?" Does the risk associated with smoking and birth control also apply to other methods of birth control? Yes—at least all hormonal birth control methods. The

"patch" is a hormonal birth control method, so the risks of smoking also apply to the patch. Moreover, the risks of using the patch become significantly increased if you are a smoker.

Obviously, the risks of smoking while taking birth control medications can be quite serious. What should you do? If you need to take birth control medications, you must be willing to quit smoking. While the risks of developing serious cardiovascular problems under the age of 30 are quite low, the dangers of smoking while taking contraceptives quickly become very pronounced as you age.

## **Smoking and Surgery Don't Mix – How to Quit for Your Health**

Are you a smoker who is scheduled to have surgery? No matter what kind of surgery you are having, your health will suffer if you decide to smoke for several weeks before and after your surgery. As difficult as it is, if you are going to have surgery, you should seriously consider quitting for your health.

### **Smoking and Surgery: What Can Go Wrong**

There are a number of complications, risks, and potential infections that can develop as a result of smoking pre- or post-surgery. What exactly can go wrong? Here's a run-down on the most common and serious complications that can arise as a result of smoking pre- or post-surgery:

**Wound Infection.** One of the most common complications that can occur if you smoke is wound infection. Smoking, in effect, steals oxygen from cells that are in the process of healing. Smoking is a risk factor for wound infection in almost any kind of surgery. Researchers have found that smokers continue smoking before surgery are at a much higher risk of developing wounds that do not heal properly.

**Cardiopulmonary complications.** Tobacco smoke is very hard on the heart, lungs, and the entire immune system. If you are scheduled for any type of heart surgery, it is imperative that you quit smoking for at least six weeks before your surgery.

**Vasoconstriction.** Vasoconstriction refers to the shrinking of the small blood vessels. Many heavy smokers are apt to experience vasoconstriction because smoking steals available oxygen from cells. When this happens, the small blood vessels shrink and the amount of hemoglobin that is needed to move oxygen from one part of the body to another. Smoking also interferes with other chemicals that let the body release enough oxygen to the cells.

Post-surgery complications are greater for smokers. Scientists at Bispebjerg University Hospital in Denmark found that patients who quit smoking before surgery were significantly less likely to develop complications post-surgery. The researchers found that, on average, patients who quit smoking pre-surgery were kept in the hospital two days less than those who kept smoking before their surgery.

Remember, you should strive to come to surgery with a body that is at its healthiest. The trauma of surgery is hard on your body. Smoking will only make it harder for your body to

heal. In some cases, surgeons may even elect not to treat a patient if they are smokers.

### **Smoking Cessation for Surgery**

If you're a smoker, the best thing you can do for your body prepare for surgery is to quit altogether, or at least reduce dramatically the number of cigarettes you smoke each day. Recent research suggests that smokers stop smoking at least six to eight weeks prior to surgery. Unfortunately, many of the smoking cessation products that would normally be available to smokers are not recommended for those heading into surgery.

Nicotine gum and nicotine patches are not advised for surgery patients. The nicotine in the gum acts similarly as cigarette nicotine, interfering with the healing process in much the same manner. Nicotine patches are also dangerous because the flow of nicotine can interfere with the flow of blood.

Many hospitals and clinics offer smoking cessation clinics that help surgery patients stop smoking before their scheduled surgery. Here are a few general guidelines on smoking cessation for surgery.

Stop immediately. If you are scheduled for upcoming surgery, you don't have time to wean yourself off cigarettes. Most doctors advise that you stop smoking as soon as you are told about your surgery. For many people, the health scare is enough to throw the cigarettes out!

Read up on your surgery. Take the time to learn about your surgery. This will help you stay focused on your health, and the importance of keeping your body in good shape for the surgery. While you don't have to go into detail, become familiar with the procedure.

Speak to your physician about smoking cessation aids you can use. Many times, surgery patients are unable to use such smoking cessation aids as nicotine gum and the nicotine patch. Find out what options are available for your specific case.

Quit together. Find someone to quit with you. Making the commitment to quit with someone else will help keep you focused on staying cigarette-free. Also, you should strive to maintain a smoke-free household during your recovery. Some doctor's recommend that all household smokers quit or dramatically reduce smoking during the patient's recovery period.

### **Old Before Your Time – How Smoking Damages Your Skin**

There are several reasons to quit smoking, most importantly for your health. But, if the damage you are doing to the inside or your body isn't enough of a deterrent, perhaps you should consider what you are doing to the outside. In addition to the bad breath, yellow teeth, and yellow fingers, smoking is slowly but surely destroying your skin and making your skin age much faster than nonsmokers.

### **The Effects of Smoking on the Appearance of Skin**

Smoking causes the skin to wrinkle, appear gaunt, and develop an odd colored complexion. Basically, the skin is much weaker and, therefore, less resilient. When this is seen in the face, it is often referred to as “smoker’s face.” In fact, smokers in their 40’s and 50’s often have wrinkles in their faces equivalent to those found in nonsmokers 20 years older.

These effects are sometimes reversible if the smoker quits early enough, but decades of smoking will mean it’s too late to reverse the effects. The effects do not, however, always reverse themselves. In fact, some studies have shown 40 and 50 year olds who only smoked in their teenage years and while in their 20’s had excessive wrinkling for their age. Many of them regained the pink hue to their skin, but never lost the wrinkles.

### **How Smoking Causes Wrinkles**

There are many ways smoking causes wrinkles. One study found that smoking actually switches on a gene that destroys collagen, which is the protein that provides skin with its elasticity. Without elasticity, skin is unable to “bounce back” to its original shape when it is stretched, ultimately leading to wrinkles.

Smoking has also been found the lack of oxygen to cause damage to skin cells and to disturb the flow of blood to the skin. In fact, just smoking for 10 minutes decreases the oxygen supply to the skin for almost an hour. The nicotine within the cigarette narrows blood vessels and prevents the blood from properly circulating to the capillaries, which are tiny blood vessels, as well as to the upper layers of the skin. The capillaries are responsible for nourishing the skin. When they are not capable of properly performing their job, more wrinkles, as well as deeper wrinkles result.

### **Smoking and Skin Color**

People who smoke also lose the “healthy glow” found on the skin of those who don’t smoke. They lose the pink color to their cheeks and, instead, take on a grayish hue. Nutritional depletion combined with lack of oxygen flow may attribute to this phenomenon.

### **Smoking and Skin Healing**

Because smoking restricts the flow of blood and oxygen to the skin, it also interferes with the healing process. Wounds to the skin take longer to heal and often produce more scarring. In addition, patients who smoke who are recovering from surgery often take longer to heal.

### **Smoking and Thinning Skin**

There is also increasing evidence that smoking causes the skin to thin excessively. In fact, researchers at St. Thomas’ Hospital in London performed an interesting study in which they compared 25 sets of identical twins. In each of these sets, one twin was a smoker and the other was not. With one particular set of twins in their 50’s, an ultrasound revealed that the smoking twin’s skin was 40% thinner than the other twins’ skin.

In addition, she had much deeper wrinkles and fewer pores. In the remaining 24 sets of twins, similar results were found, though none had quite as significant of a difference.

## **Skin Cancer**

Of course, skin cancer is also attributed to smoking. In fact, research has shown that smokers are three times as likely to develop a specific type of skin cancer, squamous cell carcinoma, than those who don't smoke. In addition, current smokers are more likely to develop the cancer than former smokers. Skin cancer, which leaves unattractive marks and results in ugly scarring is found to be responsible for 9,800 deaths in the United States every year, with 2,000 of those being from squamous cell carcinoma.

## **Reversing the Effects**

Unfortunately for smokers, the only way to reverse the aging effects smoking has on skin is to stop smoking – the earlier the better. No anti-aging creams or other medications will help. Eating a health diet won't even alter the effects smoking has on the skin. Sadly, quitting may not even be enough, particularly after the damage has already occurred. For those who started smoking when they were teenagers in order to look more "mature," they will certainly get their wish when they are 40 years old and look 60!

## **Quit for the Kids – What Secondhand Smoke Does to Their Lungs**

"Do as I say, don't do as I do." This statement should make every parent wince and stop in their tracks, and rightfully so. Not only does it smack of hypocrisy, but it also negates any sense of responsibility on a parent's part, and you know that children learn by your example and not your words. Many a smoker will confide that he or she does not want their children to take up smoking, and wish they had never started themselves.

Of course, wishing does little to change the situation, and any parent who understands the risks and dangers associated with smoking will do well to do everything possible to stop this filthy habit before it also claims the life, health and pocket books of their children. Yet, as a smoking parent, do you really understand what secondhand smoke does to your children's lungs? You probably have heard that it is bad for them, but do you know why?

Secondhand smoke is the name of the smoke that is emitted by a lit cigarette mixed with the smoke that is exhaled by a smoker engaged in the process of smoking. This kind of smoke affects all those who are in close proximity to a smoker, and thus of course children. The effect can be seen even before a child is born. Research has proven that a prenatal exposure to nicotine, as it is contained in cigarette smoke, will lead to a low birth weight in a baby. Additionally, it may contribute to prenatal death and resulting miscarriage.

Of course, once the infant is born, secondhand smoke has been linked to the much feared sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) which causes healthy infants less than one year of age to die without recognizable causation. Children who survive their infancy and later on suffer from asthmas will find their asthma attacks to be more severe than those of their counterparts who live in smoke free environments. Because of the toxins that are exhaled as well as emitted from a lit cigarette, children who are exposed to secondhand smoke quite often suffer from aggravated conditions of the respiratory system, such as chronic bronchitis, postnasal drip, and

frequent colds. Of course, there are also other health risks, such as an increased risk of ear infections and sore throats.

Nonetheless, the most severe damage done by secondhand smoke to children is the damage inflicted on their lungs. Infants who were exposed to nicotine before birth, quite often have reduced lung functions, which is the reason there are more susceptible to succumbing to SIDS after birth. One of the reasons why children are so adversely affected by secondhand smoke is the fact that their breathing rate is more rapid than an adult's breathing rate, and thus, by weight, they are receiving a larger dose of secondhand smoke and all its toxins than an adult would. Add to this factor the developmental immaturity of a child's lungs and it is no surprise that so many hospitalizations are directly traced to a parent's smoking around the children.

Another factor to consider is the quantitative exposure of children to cigarette smoke; usually smokers have other smokers in their direct circle of friends and acquaintances and are less likely to ban smoking to the outdoors or any other location away from the children. Thus, a child is usually not only exposed to a parent or caregiver's secondhand smoke, but also to that of their friends, family, and acquaintances. Sadly, children who are exposed consistently to secondhand smoke will be at a high risk of developing lung cancer, just like their smoking parents and caregivers are.

There is nothing more heartbreaking than seeing a hospitalized child whose fear of the unknown is clearly visible in their eyes and mannerisms. Similarly, if parents for some reason are unable to remain by the child's side at all times, this fear is compounded drastically. Quite possible the worst part of smoking related hospitalizations in children who were exposed to secondhand smoke is the fact that they could have been summarily avoided. Do not wait until it is too late and your little one needs to make an unscheduled trip to the hospital; quit now for the sake of your kids!

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