Smoking—A Threat to Health

Smoking and health

Smoking causes many health problems. It affects many parts of the body, not just the lungs. The more cigarettes you smoke each day, the greater your risk of disease. Smokers tend to die earlier than nonsmokers.

Smoking and cancer

Smoking can lead to cancers of the:

- Mouth and lip.
- Throat and windpipe.
- Kidney and bladder.
- Pancreas and stomach.

Smoking is the main cause of lung cancer. The more you smoke each day, the higher your chances of getting lung cancer. You are also at higher risk if you started smoking in your teens.

Smoking and lung disease

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a serious lung disease that makes it hard to breathe. It also makes your heart have to work harder. COPD symptoms get worse over time and never go away. There is no cure for COPD.

Smoking and heart disease

The more you smoke, the greater your chances of heart disease. Smoking narrows the blood vessels that carry blood to your heart muscle. They are more likely to get blocked and cause heart disease.

Smoking and stroke

Smoking also narrows the blood vessels that carry blood to your brain. A stroke happens when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off. Strokes often cause death. Even if the stroke is not fatal, you may have trouble eating, talking, and taking care of yourself.

Smoking and other health problems

Smoking can make sleep problems worse. Smokers also tend to get colds and lung infections more often.
Smoking can narrow blood vessels in your legs. When this happens, you may have pain when you walk. It could cause sores on your skin and tissue death. Sometimes the foot or leg has to be removed.

Smoking also raises your blood pressure. This can damage your kidneys. High blood pressure also puts you at risk for a heart attack or stroke.

Smoking can also slow healing and cause other problems if you need to have surgery.

**Smoking and pregnancy**

If you smoke while you are pregnant:

- You have a greater risk of losing your baby during pregnancy.
- Your baby may have a low birth weight.
- Your baby may have trouble breathing at birth.

**Smoking and nonsmokers**

Nonsmokers can be hurt by breathing in your smoke. Every time you smoke, poisonous chemicals go into the air. Each year, many nonsmokers die from lung cancer because they breathed secondhand smoke.

**Quitting Smoking**

If you stop smoking, many of these risks decrease. You can quit, no matter what your age. When you quit, your body can start to get better. Talk to your healthcare provider about ways to help you quit.