

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON **SMOKING**

Tobacco use, particularly cigarette smoking, is the single most preventable cause of death in the United States. Each year, cigarette smoking alone is directly responsible for about 30 percent of all cancer deaths in the United States. Cigarette smoking also causes chronic lung diseases, stroke and cataracts. Smoking during pregnancy can cause stillbirth, low birth weight, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), and other serious complications. Stopping smoking greatly reduces a person's risk of developing these diseases and pregnancy complications.

What are the effects of cigarette smoking on cancer rates?

Cigarette smoking causes 87 percent of lung cancer deaths. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in both men and women. Smoking is also responsible for most cancers of the larynx, oral cavity and pharynx, esophagus, and bladder. In addition, it is a cause of kidney, pancreatic, cervical and stomach cancers, as well as acute myeloid leukemia.

Are there any health risks for non-smokers?

The health risks caused by cigarette smoking are not limited to smokers. Exposure to secondhand smoke significantly increases the risk of lung cancer and heart disease in nonsmokers, as well as several respiratory illnesses in young children. (Secondhand smoke is a combination of the smoke that is released from the end of a burning cigarette and the smoke exhaled from the lungs of smokers.)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Institute of Environmental Health Science's National Toxicology Program, and the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) have all classified secondhand smoke as a substance that can cause cancer in humans. The EPA has estimated that exposure to secondhand smoke causes about 3,000 lung cancer deaths among nonsmokers and is responsible for up to 300,000 cases of lower respiratory tract infections in children up to 18 months of age in the United States each year.

What harmful chemicals are found in cigarette smoke?

Cigarette smoke contains about 4,000 chemical agents, including over 60 carcinogens. In addition, many of these substances, such as carbon monoxide, tar, arsenic and lead, are poisonous and toxic to the human body. Nicotine causes addiction to cigarettes and other tobacco products that is similar to the addiction produced by using heroin and cocaine.

How does exposure to tobacco smoke affect the cigarette smoker?

Smoking harms nearly every major organ of the body. The risk of developing smoking-related diseases, such as lung and other cancers, heart disease, stroke, and respiratory illnesses increases with total lifetime exposure to cigarette smoke. This includes the number of cigarettes a person smokes each day, the intensity of smoking (i.e., the size and frequency of puffs), the age at which smoking began, the number of years a person has smoked, and a smoker's secondhand smoke exposure.

How would stopping smoking affect the risk of developing cancer and other diseases?

Smoking cessation has major and immediate health benefits for men and women of all ages. Stopping smoking decreases the risk of lung and other cancers, heart attack, stroke, and chronic lung disease. The earlier a person quits, the greater the health benefits.

Source: National Cancer Institute

For free one-on-one help with quitting and free printed materials from the National Cancer Institute, call the NCI's Smoking Quitline at 1-800-QUITNOW (784-8669). A helpful online resource is www.smokefree.gov.

