

Cigarette smoking is an addiction disorder and the cause of many serious health problems.

## Frequent Signs and Symptoms

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An average smoker smokes 15 to 20 cigarettes a day. The more one smokes, the greater the health risks. Someone who smokes even 1 to 4 cigarettes a day is still at greater risk for health problems than nonsmokers.

Certain activities also become linked with smoking. These include smoking after a meal, when drinking coffee, while on the phone, relaxing, or if stressed.

## Causes

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There are many chemicals in cigarette smoke. Among them are tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide (a poisonous gas). These three substances are a health risk to the person smoking and to those who breathe in the second-hand smoke. Tar condenses into a sticky substance in the lungs. Nicotine is the addictive component of tobacco smoke. Carbon monoxide decreases the oxygen carried by the red blood cells in the body.

## Risk Increases With:

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Teenagers. Smoking often begins as a social behavior and an adventure. Teens feel pressure from friends; they want to be socially accepted in certain groups, and to appear more mature.

- People who are under stress or feel nervous.
- Less education (high school dropouts are more likely to smoke than college graduates).
- Lower economic group.
- Ages 25 to 44. They have the highest smoking rates.
- Blue-collar occupations.
- Risk taking and outgoing personality types.
- Family history of smoking.
- Alcoholics.

## Preventative Measures

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- Education about health risks.
- Prohibiting smoking in public places.

## Expected Outcomes

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It is never too late to quit. Anyone who smokes should make every attempt to quit. If you do, it can reverse most of the health risks and bring about a better quality of life.

## Possible Complications

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- Cancer, heart, blood vessel, and lung diseases.
- Problems with infertility.
- Problems in pregnancy, and risks to the baby's health.
- Earlier menopause and possible osteoporosis.
- Skin becomes rougher, thicker, and more wrinkled.
- Secondhand smoke is harmful to others.
- Home fire deaths (the majority of which are caused by smoking).

## Diagnosis and Treatment

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### General Measures

- Smokers can quit on their own or be helped by a variety of methods. No one way works for everyone.
- See your health care provider for help and advice.
- Self-help steps in quitting: 1) Think about your smoking habits and when and why you smoke. 2) Make up your mind to quit. 3) Choose the day and quit on that day. 4) Use any kind of substitute (gum, hard candy). Give up those activities, for now, that you link with smoking. 5) Reward yourself for not smoking (buy yourself something special).
- 6) During the first few weeks, eat plenty of low-calorie snacks; drink lots of water.
- For help in quitting, check the local office of the American Cancer Society or The American Lung Association.
- Join a support group or a smoking cessation program.

- Try out other ideas, such as hypnosis or acupuncture.
- Concerns about quitting: 1) Weight gain. Average amount is 5 to 8 pounds over 5 years (for some, there is no weight gain). 2) Stress. It may occur. Get counseling or help with managing stress. 3) Withdrawal. Physical symptoms stop in about 10 to 14 days. Psychological symptoms may go on for months or longer. 4) Fear of failure. Relapse is common. Many people have had to try more than once, and by more than one method.

## Medications

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Smoking cessation aids include nicotine gum, skin patches, nasal sprays, or inhalers. They can help reduce withdrawal symptoms. Discuss the risks and benefits with your health care provider. These aids are to be used along with counseling or a smoking-cessation program.

Antidepressants may be prescribed for a short time.

## Diet

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No special diet. Eat health, low-fat, high-fiber foods.



**Notify Our Office If** – You or a family member is a cigarette smoker and wants help in quitting.