

Heart Disease and Women: Kicking the Smoking Habit

CORONARY HEART DISEASE is a woman's concern. Every woman's concern. One in ten American women 45 to 64 years of age has some form of heart disease, and this increases to one in five women over 65. Another 1.6 million women have had a stroke. Both heart disease and stroke are known as cardiovascular diseases, which are serious disorders of the heart and blood vessel system.

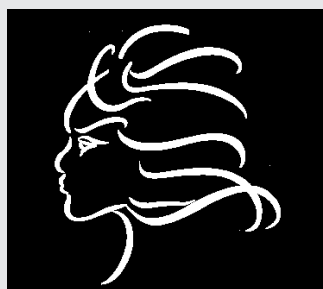
Cigarette smoking is a habit that greatly increases your chances of developing cardiovascular diseases. Surprising as it may seem, smoking by women in this country causes almost as many deaths from heart disease as from lung cancer. If you smoke, you are two to six times more likely to suffer a heart attack than a nonsmoking woman, and the risk increases with the number of cigarettes you smoke each day. Smoking also boosts the risk of stroke.

There is simply no safe way to smoke. Although low-tar and low-nicotine cigarettes may reduce the lung cancer risk somewhat, they do not lessen the risks of heart diseases. The only safe and healthful course is not to smoke at all.

If you now use cigarettes, you *can* stop. There are as many ex-smokers in this country today as there are smokers. Becoming a successful ex-smoker is what this fact sheet is all about.

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT QUITTING

There is nothing easy about giving up cigarettes. But as hard as quitting may be, the results are well worth it. In the first year after stopping smoking, the risk of coronary heart disease drops sharply. It then gradually returns to "normal"—that is, the same risk as someone who never smoked. So no matter what your age, quitting will lessen your chances of developing heart disease.



Heart Disease Risk Factors

Risk factors are habits or traits that make a person more likely to develop a disease. Many of those for heart disease can be controlled. These include:

- ▲ Cigarette smoking
- ▲ High blood pressure
- ▲ High blood cholesterol
- ▲ Overweight
- ▲ Physical inactivity
- ▲ Diabetes

The more risk factors you have, the greater your risk. So take action—take control!

Take some time to think about other benefits of being an ex-smoker. Check the reasons that apply to you in the box on page 2. Add any other reasons you think are important. This is an important first step in kicking the smoking habit—figuring out for yourself what you have to gain.

Many women fear that if they stop smoking they will gain a lot of unwanted weight. But the average weight gain for ex-smokers is only about 5 pounds. Choosing more foods lower in calories and boosting your physical activity level will help prevent weight gain. And if you do gain more than a few pounds, you can work on losing them after you have become comfortable as a non-smoker. When you think about the enormous health risks of smoking, the possibility of putting on a little extra weight is not a reason to continue smoking.

GETTING READY TO QUIT

Once you decide to stop smoking, you'll need to set a target date for quitting. Choose a time when you won't be under a lot of stress. To help you stick to your quit date, write "I will quit smoking on (fill in the date)" on a piece of paper and have someone sign it with you. Now you have a contract. Also list on your contract how you'll reward yourself for



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Why I Want to Quit Smoking

- I will greatly lessen my chances of having a heart attack or stroke.
- I will greatly lessen my chances of getting lung cancer, emphysema, and other lung diseases.
- I will have fewer colds or flu each year.
- I will have better smelling clothes, hair, breath, home, and car.
- I will climb stairs and walk without getting out of breath.
- I will have fewer wrinkles.
- I will be free of my morning cough.
- I will reduce the number of coughs, colds, and earaches my children will have.
- I will have more energy to pursue physical activities I enjoy.
- I will have more control over my life.
- I will _____
- I will _____
- I will _____
- I will _____
- I will _____

each week and month of not smoking.

Ask the person who cosigns your contract—or another friend or family member—to give you special support in your efforts to quit. Plan to talk with your supporter regularly to share your progress and to ask for encouragement. If possible, quit with a relative or friend.

BREAKING THE HABIT

Surviving “Day One.” On the evening before your quit day, throw away all cigarettes, matches, lighters, and ashtrays. Plan some special activities for the next day to keep you busy, such as a long walk, a movie, or an outing with a friend. Ask family members and friends not to offer you cigarettes or to smoke in front of you. Your goal is to get through that first important day smoke-free—which will help you succeed on each day after that.

Know Yourself. To quit successfully, you need to know your smoking “triggers,” which are situations and feelings that bring on the urge to light up. Common triggers are drinking coffee, finishing a meal, watching television, having an alcoholic drink, talking on the phone, watching someone else smoke, or being under stress. Make a list of your personal smoking triggers, and avoid as many as you can.

Find New Habits. Replace “triggers” with new activities that you *don’t* associate with smoking. For example, if you always had a cigarette with a cup of coffee, switch to tea for awhile. If you’re feeling tense, try deep breathing to calm yourself. (Take a slow, deep breath, count to five, and release it. Repeat 10 times.)

Keep Busy. Get involved in projects that require you to use your hands, such as sewing, gardening, or jigsaw puzzles. Be as physically active as you can. When you feel the urge to put something in your mouth, have low-calorie substitutes ready, such as vegetable sticks, apple slices, or sugarless gum.

Know What To Expect. Shortly after quitting, you may experience headaches, irritability, tiredness, constipation, or trouble concentrating. While these symptoms are not pleasant, it is important to know that they are signs that your body is recovering from smoking. Most symptoms end within 2 to 4 weeks.

Two Things To Help You. Nicotine chewing gum and a nicotine patch are both available by prescription. The gum and the patch can be used for a limited time to help you stay off cigarettes by lessening your withdrawal symptoms. But nicotine gum and the

Stopping Smoking’s Triggers

You probably have certain situations and feelings that trigger your desire to smoke. Do you smoke while on the telephone? After having a meal or a drink? When you feel stressed?

To make stopping easier, find out what your triggers are—and then come up with alternate behaviors. Have a slice of apple or a stick of sugar-free gum, for instance, rather than a cigarette. Use the space below to record when you feel the urge to smoke and what you might do instead:

Trigger Situation/ Feeling	Alternate Behavior
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

nicotine patch are not for everyone. Pregnant women, nursing mothers, and people with serious heart problems cannot use them safely. Talk with your health professional first.

More Help Is Available. There are many free or low cost programs available to help you stop smoking. Check with local chapters of the American Lung Association and the American Cancer Society, area hospitals, health

maintenance organizations (HMOs), your workplace, and community groups with an interest in health.

Be Good To Yourself. Get plenty of rest, drink lots of fluids, and eat three balanced, healthful meals each day. If you are not as cheerful or energetic as usual during the first several weeks after quitting, don’t feel guilty. You are making a major change in your life, and for that you deserve a lot of credit.



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IF YOU “SLIP”

A “slip” means that you have had a small setback and smoked a cigarette after your quit date. Don’t worry. Most smokers “slip” three to five times before they quit for good. But to get right back on the nonsmoker track, here are some tips:

Don’t Get Discouraged.

Having a cigarette or two doesn’t mean you have failed. It doesn’t mean you can’t quit smoking. Keep thinking of yourself as a nonsmoker. You are one.

Learn From Experience.

What was the trigger that made you light up? Were you having a drink at a party, or feeling angry at someone? Think back on the day’s events until you can remember.

Take Charge. Make a list of things you will do the next time you are in that situation—and other tempting situations as well. Reread your list of all the reasons you want to quit. You’re on your way.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you want to know more about keeping your heart healthy, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) has available free fact sheets on the following subjects: preventing high blood pressure, preventing high blood cholesterol, the heart benefits of physical activity, and heart disease risk factors for women.

Contact:

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