

SMOKING CESSATION & WHY SMOKING IS BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH

Why should I quit smoking?

If you are a smoker, one of the most important things that you can do for your health is to stop smoking. If you continue to smoke, you may become one of the more than 430,000 smoking-related deaths that occur every year. Smoking is the Number 1 cause of preventable diseases and death in the United States. Tobacco is a major risk factor for heart disease, heart attack, lung disease, stroke, and cancer.

Women who smoke and take birth control pills are at an even greater risk for heart disease and stroke compared to women who use birth control pills but do not smoke.

What effect does smoking have on my heart and circulation?

Smoking or exposure to high levels of secondary tobacco smoke causes several temporary effects on a person's heart and blood vessels. The nicotine in the smoke temporarily increases the blood pressure, heart rate, amount of blood pumped by the heart, and blood flow in the heart's arteries. It also causes the arteries in the arms and legs to constrict. This increases the workload on the heart and blood vessels.

Tobacco smoke also has long term effects on the heart and circulation. Smoking reduces the amount of oxygen to the heart muscle. At the same time, it makes the heart beat faster, which also increases the demand for oxygen. Thus, when smokers with heart disease such as angina exert themselves, they have chest pain sooner than they normally would. Often they must restrict their activity more than they otherwise would.

People who already have high blood pressure, high cholesterol (or both) and who smoke increase their risk of heart attack. The combination of blood vessel constriction caused by the nicotine, increased workload on the heart, and the reduced amount of oxygen to the heart greatly increases the risk of heart attack.

Can my smoking hurt anyone else?

In addition to your own health risks, the second hand smoke created by cigarettes is very hazardous to the health of your loved ones.

- More than 37,0000 people a year die from heart and blood vessel diseases caused by other people's smoke.
- Children who parents smoke are more at risk for asthma and other harmful lung illnesses.
- People who smoke are more likely to cough and spread germs in the household. This causes more chest illnesses in children and frail elderly who may also be in the home.
- Exposure to second hand smoke increases the risk of heart disease for others in the home, including children.
- Smoking has been proven to lead to poor pregnancy outcomes and it is a risk factor for sudden infant death syndrome.
- Most deaths that occur as a result of fires in the home are caused by smoking materials.

All of these risk factors are reasons to quit smoking.

What medications are available to help me stop smoking?

Your physician can prescribe medication to help you quit smoking. The United States Food and Drug Administration has approved the medications listed below to help you stop smoking and to lessen the urge to smoke. **DO NOT SMOKE** while taking these nicotine products:

- Nicotine gum – available over the counter
- Nicotine patch – available over the counter
- Chantix - available by prescription only
- Nicotine inhaler - available by prescription only
- Nicotine nasal spray – available by prescription only.

How do I stop smoking and the cigarette cravings?

Even if you have been unsuccessful with attempts in the past, you can stop smoking. It takes some people an average of six times to try to quit smoking before they are able to quit for good. Each time you try to quit will bring you closer to your goal of succeeding. Five key steps for quitting smoking outlined by the US Dept. of Health and Human Services are listed below:

1. GET READY:

- ✓ Set a quit date and stick to it without a single puff!
- ✓ Think about past quit attempts, what worked, and what did not.
- ✓ My quit date: _____

2. GET SUPPORT:

- ✓ Tell your family and friends that you are quitting and seek their encouragement.
- ✓ Make a list of the people who can help you.
- ✓ Speak with your physician about quitting.

3. LEARN NEW SKILLS AND BEHAVIORS TO COMBAT CRAVINGS:

- ✓ Try to get more sleep and reduce stress
- ✓ Change your routines or habits, such as getting up from the table right after eating to prevent from smoking.
- ✓ Distract yourself from the urge to smoke with other activities, such as exercise, reading, calling one of the people on your support list.
- ✓ Snack on low calorie foods such as carrots, celery, air-popped popcorn, or sugarless gum when you have cravings.

4. GET MEDICATION AND USE IT CORRECTLY:

- ✓ Talk with your physician regarding medications to assist in quitting, even if they are over-the-counter medications to make sure they are right for you.

5. BE PREPARED FOR RELAPSE OR DIFFICULT SITUATIONS:

- ✓ Avoid alcohol when possible.
- ✓ Be careful around other smokers.

- ✓ Avoid using the smoking habit to improve your mood.
- ✓ Eat healthy and stay active.

What are the health benefits of stopping smoking?

- ♥ In 2 weeks to 3 months your circulation improves, physical endurance improves, walking and climbing steps becomes easier, and lung function increases up to 30%.
- ♥ In 1 to 9 months coughing, sinus congestion and fatigue decrease. The cilia in the lungs (tiny hairs on the lining of the lungs to help prevent germs from settling in the lungs) regrow thus cleansing the lungs and reducing your risk of infection.
- ♥ In 1 year the risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker's.
- ♥ In 5 years the lung cancer risk of the average ex-smoker (who smoked 1 pack per day) decreases by almost half, the stroke risk is gradually reduced to that of a nonsmoker, and the risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, and esophagus is half that of a smoker's.
- ♥ In 10 years the lung cancer death rate approaches that of someone who has never smoked.
- ♥ In 15 years the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke is similar to someone who never smoked.

Is there a smoking cessation program at Danbury Hospital?

Danbury Hospital offers both a smoking cessation program to stop smoking, called "Quit Now," and a smoking cessation support group, called "Stay Quit." For more information on these two programs, please contact Marianne Mitchell, RN, APRN at (203) 739-8161.

Sources:

American Heart Association @ www.americanheart.org

American Stroke Association @ www.strokeassociation.org

U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services. (2000). Treating tobacco use and dependence. Retrieved from www.surgeongeneral.gov

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For more information, or to learn about the specialized services and programs available, please visit www.westernconnecticuthealthnetwork.org