



TOBACCO FACTS

What happens when a person smokes?

Every time a smoker inhales, chemicals in the smoke pass from the lungs to the bloodstream and are carried throughout the body. It takes only eight seconds for nicotine to enter the brain. There, it acts as a stimulant, producing feelings of alertness and mild pleasure.

Nicotine also raises blood pressure and constricts the arteries. This puts a strain on the heart. At the same time carbon monoxide replaces some of the oxygen in the bloodstream. This means that the heart has to work harder still to supply the cells with adequate oxygen.

Meanwhile, tar and smoke particles are trapped in the lungs. There, they cling to the delicate linings of the lung's air chambers. Over time, abrasion and scarring by tar and particles can lead to emphysema and other diseases.

What about smoking and cancer?

Smoking is known to be a direct cause of cancers of the lungs, throat, mouth, larynx and stomach. Smoking also causes diseases of the heart and circulatory system.

What if a person smokes without inhaling?

Even when someone tries not to inhale, some of the smoke is breathed in. Also, tobacco smoke affects every part of the body that it touches. It can damage the lips, mouth and throat. Cancers of these areas may result.

Can people get addicted to cigarettes?

Yes. In 1988, the U.S. Surgeon General declared that nicotine is an addictive substance, in the same class as heroin and cocaine.

Are low-tar cigarettes better?

Low-tar cigarettes may reduce some of the risks of smoking, but will not eliminate them. Smokers of low-tar cigarettes tend to smoke more and inhale more deeply. This way they get less tar, but more of other chemicals.

Things to remember about tobacco

1. People often smoke to get energy, to stay awake, or to suppress appetite. But as use continues, tolerance develops. Users need to smoke more to get the same effect.
2. Most adults who are smokers started smoking before age 20.
3. The smoke from pipes and cigars contains more toxic chemicals than cigarette smoke. Pipe and cigar smokers tend to hold the smoke in their mouths longer, increasing their risk of cancers of the lip, mouth, throat and stomach.
4. Life insurance rates are higher for smokers than for non-smokers.
5. Women who smoke and take birth control pills run a greater risk of heart disease, strokes, and cancers of the uterus and cervix.
6. Smoking during pregnancy reduces oxygen supply to the fetus. Also, nicotine passes from the mother's blood to the fetus. Babies born to smokers tend to weigh less at birth.
7. In most states, it is illegal for anyone under age 18 to buy tobacco products; but, in Alabama, Alaska, Utah and New Jersey, it is illegal for anyone 19 or under to buy tobacco products.