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## ***THE NEED TO STOP SMOKING***

### **Why Is It So Hard to Quit Smoking?**

Mark Twain said, "Quitting smoking is easy. I've done it a thousand times." Maybe you've tried to quit too. Why is quitting and staying quit hard for so many people? The answer is nicotine.

Quitting smoking is not easy, but it can be done. To have the best chance of quitting successfully, you need to know what you're up against, what your options are, and where to go for help. This document will provide you with this information.

The US Surgeon General has stated, "Smoking cessation (stopping smoking) represents the single most important step that smokers can take to enhance the length and quality of their lives."

### **Nicotine**

Nicotine is a drug found naturally in tobacco. It is highly addictive – as addictive as heroin or cocaine. Over time, the body becomes both physically and psychologically dependent on nicotine. Studies have shown that smokers must overcome both of these addictions to be successful at quitting and staying quit.

### **Nicotine Withdrawal**

When smokers try to cut back or quit, the absence of nicotine leads to withdrawal symptoms. Withdrawal is both physical and mental. Physically, the body reacts to the absence of nicotine. Psychologically, the smoker is faced with giving up a habit, which requires a major change in behavior. Both must be addressed in order for the quitting process to work.

Withdrawal symptoms can include any of the following:

dizziness (which may only last 1-2 days in the beginning)

depression

feelings of frustration and anger

irritability

sleep disturbances, including having trouble falling asleep, staying asleep and having bad dreams or even nightmares

trouble concentrating

restlessness

headache

tiredness

increased appetite

These symptoms can lead the smoker to again start smoking cigarettes again to boost blood levels of nicotine back to a level where there are no symptoms.

### **Aids to Stop Smoking**

There are prescription drug and Smokers Cessation Classes, which can help the smoker quit and minimize withdrawal. Please see your Primary Care Physician for more details.

### **Why Quit?**

#### **Your Health**

Smokers are twice as likely to die from heart attacks as are nonsmokers. And smoking is a major risk factor for peripheral vascular disease, a narrowing of the blood vessels that carry blood to the leg and arm muscles, as well as cerebrovascular disease that can cause strokes.

Smoking also causes premature wrinkling of the skin, bad breath, bad smelling clothes and hair, and yellow fingernails and an increased risk of macular degeneration, one of the most common causes of blindness in the elderly.

For women, there are unique risks. Women over 35 who smoke and use birth control pills are in a high-risk group for heart attack, stroke, and blood clots of the legs. Women who smoke are more likely to have a miscarriage or a lower birth-weight baby. Low birth-weight babies are more likely to die or to be impaired. It is also linked to SIDS death in infants. Second hand smoke can cause or exacerbate asthma, bronchitis or other breathing problems in children and other people.

Based on data collected in the late 1990s, the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimated that adult male smokers lost an average of 13.2 years of life and female smokers lost 14.5 years of life because of smoking.

No matter what your age or how long you've smoked, quitting will help you live longer. People who stop smoking before age 50 cut their risk of dying in the next 15 years in half compared with those who continue to smoke. Ex-smokers also enjoy a higher quality of life with fewer illnesses from cold and flu viruses, better self-reported health, and reduced rates of bronchitis and pneumonia.

Cigarette smoking accounts for at least 30% of all cancer deaths. It is a major cause of cancers of the lung, larynx (voice box), oral cavity, pharynx (throat), esophagus, and bladder, and is a contributing cause in the development of cancers of the pancreas, cervix, kidney, stomach, and also some leukemias.

Cancers account for only about half of the deaths related to smoking. Smoking is also a major cause of heart disease, aneurysms, bronchitis, emphysema, and stroke, and it contributes to the severity of pneumonia and asthma.

Smoking has also been linked to a variety of other health problems, including gum disease, cataracts, bone thinning, hip fractures, and peptic ulcers.