Why are cigarette smoking and nicotine products dangerous?

Cigarette smoking is a known cause of many cancers, as well as lung disease, heart disease, ulcer disease and osteoporosis. Cigarette smoking also can cause pregnancy complications, premature aging/wrinkling of your skin and can contribute to sexual problems. Nicotine is the major contributing factor to the dependence-forming properties of tobacco use. The effects of nicotine include increased blood pressure, headaches, sleep disturbances, increased blood clotting, pain in joints, diarrhea, problems with blood sugar metabolism and most importantly, ADDICTION. In fact, research suggests that nicotine may be as addictive as heroin, cocaine and alcohol.

What about smoking clove cigarettes, cigars, hookah and bidi?

- **Clove** cigarettes (Kreteks) also contain nicotine. In fact blood levels of nicotine and carbon monoxide from smokers were tested after smoking kreteks and were found to be similar to non-clove brands of cigarettes, such as Marlboro.
- **Cigars** may have up to 4 times the nicotine of a cigarette.
- **Hookah** uses black “air-cured” tobacco which has a higher risk of esophageal cancer. The filtering effect of water does NOT make it less dangerous.
- **Bidi**, hand-rolled leaf-wrapped cigarettes, often offered with sweet flavors such as chocolate and cherry, have a nicotine content that is 3-5 times that of a cigarette.

What about smokeless tobacco?

Chewing tobacco and snuff are associated with substantial risks for gum and mouth cancers, stained teeth, bad breath and loss of taste. Snus, a form of moist snuff, has a nicotine content 2-6 times that of a cigarette.

What about e-cigarettes?

Electronic cigarettes are battery operated devices that provide doses of nicotine for inhalation. A nicotine-containing liquid available in a variety of flavors is put in the device. While e-cigarette manufacturers promote their products as a path to smoking cessation, there is no research that supports this. In fact, major public health organizations such as the CDC have expressed concerns about e-cigarettes beyond nicotine and its potential adverse effects on adolescent brain development.

Other ingredients have been identified in e-cigarettes such as volatile organic compounds
and ultra-fine particulates, including heavy metals. The contention that these products emit a harmless water vapor is simply not true.

**Is it worth quitting?**

- Within 20 minutes of your last cigarette, blood-pressure and pulse return to normal
- Within 8 hours of your last cigarette carbon monoxide levels drop to normal and oxygen levels increase to normal
- Within 2 days of quitting, nerve endings start to regrow and your ability to smell and taste improve
- Within 3 months, circulation improves and lung function increases up to 30% Lowered risk for lung cancer and heart disease within 1-2 years of quitting
- Reduced risk of developing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Reduced risk of infertility and impotence

**Getting Ready to Quit**

- Set a start date
- Tell co-workers, friends and family of your intent to stop smoking
- Anticipate foods, activities and situations that are associated with smoking, and have oral substitutes available such as carrot/celery sticks, gum, mints, hard candies, sunflower seeds, etc
- Remove all tobacco products from home, car, work, and even your car ashtray!
- Talk to your provider about getting help to stop smoking

**Resources to Help you Quit**

**Medications:**

- Over the counter Nicotine replacement methods-gum, lozenges, patches are designed to reduce the intensity of nicotine cravings (difficulty falling asleep, irritability, anxiety, difficulty concentrating) but will not prevent symptoms fully. Tapering of the nicotine dose helps wean off cigarettes.
- Varenicline (Chantix) is a prescription medication that works in the brain to reduce nicotine withdrawal symptoms and cravings.
- Buproprion (Wellbutrin) is a prescription medication that helps you stop smoking.

**Other Modalities to help you Quit:**

- Acupuncture, hypnotherapy, yoga
- Behavioral programs available through the RI Department of Health “QuitworksRI”. Your Health Services provider can help with the referral.
- Miriam Hospital Behavioral Medicine (also sponsors a paid research study breatheasy@lifespan.org) 401-793-8770
- Quitline Services sponsored by the CDC 1-800-QUIT-NOW

Combining medications with behavioral and other modalities may offer the best results for tobacco cessation. In fact, combining a behavioral program with a medication doubles the chances of success. Talk to your provider to discuss options that work best for you.

**What happens if I relapse?**

Don’t get discouraged; smokers may need several attempts to quit. Discuss with your
provider or program what happened that
derailed the attempt. On average it can take 4-5
attempts before achieving success staying
tobacco free.

Sources:
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