

# Smoking & Tobacco Use

*Tobacco use, particularly cigarette smoking, is the single most preventable cause of death in the United States. The number of deaths per year from smoking exceeds the number of deaths per year from accidents, suicides, drug use, homicides and AIDS combined. An estimated 44 million U.S. adults are smokers, and almost 20 percent or one quarter of all U. S. high school students smoke cigarettes.*

**The good news is that no matter how old you are, it's never too late to improve your health by kicking the tobacco habit for good.**

## Hazards of Tobacco Use

Smoking is responsible for 87 percent of all lung cancer deaths in the United States and one-third of all cancer deaths. In addition, smoking is a major cause of heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and is associated with stomach ulcers. Smoking also is linked to cancers of the bladder, kidney, pancreas, cervix, pharynx, larynx, esophagus and mouth. Smoking by pregnant women may result in injury to the fetus, premature birth and low birth weight.

Chewing tobacco and dipping snuff are not safe alternatives to smoking either. They are just as addictive and can cause cancers of the mouth and throat at a young age.

## Benefits of Quitting Smoking

The benefits of quitting smoking are immediate and significant. Almost instantaneously, a person's circulation, pulse rate and blood pressure begin to improve and the carbon monoxide level in the blood begins to decline. Within a few days of quitting, a person's senses of taste and smell start to return, and breathing becomes increasingly easier.

Smokers who quit, regardless of age, live longer than those who continue to smoke. After 10 to 15 years, an ex-smoker's risk of premature death approaches that of a person who has never smoked. About 10 years after quitting, the risk of dying from lung cancer is 30 to 50 percent less than the risk for those who continue to smoke. Quitting also lowers the risk for other diseases, including heart disease and chronic lung disease.



*One reason for quitting cigarettes is the amount of money you can save. At three dollars a pack, someone who smokes a pack a day can save more than \$1,000 a year. Pictured here is a way to visualize your savings, as well as your progress quitting.*

## Tips for Quitting Cigarettes

Smoking is probably one of the hardest addictions to overcome. For many people, it may take six to eight attempts before succeeding. Usually, people who stop smoking for at least three months are able to remain smoke-free for the rest of their lives. Helpful tips for quitting include:

- **Get ready.** Select a quit day and make it special. Reduce usage before your quit day or switch to a brand you find distasteful and low in tar and nicotine.
- **Get support.** Ask family and friends to help you quit by encouraging your efforts and by not smoking around you. Ask your doctor or employer for help in finding a smoking cessation program.
- **Learn new skills and behaviors.** Change daily routines to break away from tobacco triggers so that you're not tempted. Avoid drinking alcohol, coffee and other beverages you associate with smoking. Keep busy and active.
- **Consider nicotine replacement therapy.** Try the nicotine patch or gum available at many drug stores. Studies have shown that using nicotine replacement with antidepressant medications may double your chances of quitting successfully and may help prevent or delay weight gain. Many of these medications require a physician prescription. Speak with your doctor about what aids are right for you.
- **Be prepared for relapse or difficult situations.**

## Tips for Quitting Dip and Snuff

As with smoking, dip and snuff also are hard addictions to overcome, and it may take two or three attempts to quit. Nicotine is the addictive ingredient in both cigarettes and tobacco. Dip and chew, however, contain more nicotine than cigarettes. Helpful tips for quitting dip and snuff include:

- **Get ready.** Select a quit day and make it special. Reduce usage before your quit day.
- **Get support.** Ask family and friends to help you quit by encouraging your efforts. Ask your doctor or employer for help in finding a tobacco cessation program.
- **Learn new skills and behaviors.** Get your teeth cleaned. You'll enjoy the fresh feeling and having whiter teeth. Substitute peppermints, sunflower seeds or gum to keep your mouth busy. Keep busy and active.
- **Consider nicotine replacement therapy.** Buy a nicotine patch or nicotine gum available at many pharmacies. Studies have shown that using nicotine replacement with antidepressant medications may double your chances of quitting successfully and may help prevent weight gain. Many of these medications require a physician prescription. Speak with your doctor about what aids are right for you.

It may take six to eight attempts before you are finally able to quit. Don't give up!

## Tips for Parents to Help Their Children Avoid Tobacco Products

- Be good role models. Don't smoke. Don't use smokeless tobacco products.
- Talk openly with your children about not using tobacco and teach them how to resist peer pressure.
- Encourage your children's school to prevent and reduce student tobacco use.
- Combat marketing for tobacco products by letting your children know how cigarette companies are trying to reach and influence youth.

Visit [www.mdanderson.org/preventionstudy](http://www.mdanderson.org/preventionstudy) to learn about tobacco cessation studies at MD Anderson.



**Smokers who quit, regardless of age, live longer than those who continue to smoke.**

**Above:** Candies and gum make an excellent alternative for breaking away from tobacco triggers.

**Left:** Nicotine replacement therapy — patches or gum — also helps individuals quit tobacco use. If you want to quit, ask your doctor about using the patch, nicotine gum or nasal spray.

## MD Anderson Resources

The Cancer Prevention Center can help you understand your risk of developing cancer through risk assessment and, when appropriate, genetic testing. The center offers personalized risk-reduction strategies, including healthy lifestyle recommendations and the use of medications to reduce cancer risk. Specialists perform risk-based cancer screening exams based on age, gender and cancer risk factors.

MD Anderson provides cancer care services at five convenient locations in the greater Houston area: Bay Area, Katy, Texas Medical Center, Sugar Land and The Woodlands.

For more information about MD Anderson programs or services, or to make an appointment, contact askMDAnderson at 1-877-632-6789 and ask for Carla, or visit [www.mdanderson.org/ask](http://www.mdanderson.org/ask).

### Want to learn how you can prevent cancer?

Get a personalized action plan by completing MD Anderson's Cancer Risk Check at [www.mdanderson.org/riskcheck](http://www.mdanderson.org/riskcheck).