

Police: Tobacco

The smoking of tobacco products is the chief avoidable cause of death in our society. Smokers are more likely than nonsmokers to contract heart disease - some 170,000 die each year from smoking-related coronary heart disease. Lung, larynx, esophageal, bladder, pancreatic, and kidney cancers also strike smokers at increased rates. Some 30 percent of cancer deaths (130,000 per year) are linked to smoking. Chronic, obstructive lung diseases such as emphysema and chronic bronchitis are 10 times more likely to occur among smokers than among nonsmokers.

Smoking during pregnancy also poses serious risks. Spontaneous abortion, preterm birth, low birth weights, and fetal and infant deaths are all more likely to occur when the pregnant woman is a smoker.

Cigarette smoke contains some 4,000 chemicals, several of which are known carcinogens. Perhaps the most dangerous substance in tobacco smoke is nicotine. Nicotine is the substance that reinforces and strengthens the desire to smoke. Because nicotine is highly addictive, addicts find it very difficult to stop smoking. Of 1,000 typical smokers, fewer than 20 percent succeed in stopping on the first try.

Many people smoke because they believe cigarettes calm their nerves. Actually, smoking releases epinephrine, a hormone which creates physiological stress in the smoker, rather than relaxation. The addictive quality of epinephrine makes the user feel that he/she must smoke more to calm down, when the cigarette smoke itself is causing the agitation. Tobacco is addictive. Most users develop a tolerance for nicotine and need greater amounts to produce a desired effect. Smokers become physically and psychologically dependent and will suffer withdrawal symptoms when use is stopped. Physical withdrawal symptoms include: changes in body temperature, heart rate, digestion, muscle tone, and appetite. Psychological symptoms include: irritability, anxiety, sleep disturbances, nervousness, headaches, fatigue, nausea, and cravings for tobacco that can last for days, weeks, months, years, or an entire lifetime.

SMOKING FACTS

1. **Use your head.** Smoking is responsible for close to 420,000 deaths each year.
2. **Stay active.** Exercising and participating in sports is nearly impossible if you smoke cigarettes.
3. **Stay informed.** Young smokers are 100 times more likely to smoke pot and become addicted to other illicit substances such as heroin and cocaine.
4. **Be aware of the risks.** Smoking can lead to many physical problems, including emphysema, heart disease, stroke, and cancer.
5. **Keep your edge.** Smoking makes you smell bad, gives you bad breath, makes your fingers turn yellow, and gives your premature wrinkles.
6. **Play it safe.** Experimenting with smoking could lead to full-fledged addiction and a lifetime of trying to quit.
7. **Do the smart thing.** Smoking puts your health and the health of those around you at risk.
8. **Find ways to reduce anxiety.** Smoking may actually contribute to your state of agitation.
9. **Be a real friend.** If you know someone who smokes, be part of the solution. Urge your friend to get help.