



# SMOKING AND HIV

## **WHY IS SMOKING MORE DANGEROUS FOR PEOPLE WITH HIV?**

People with HIV disease are more likely to smoke than healthy people. Smoking can interfere with normal lung function in healthy people. In people with HIV, smoking can make it more difficult to fight off serious infections.

People with HIV disease are now living longer. Smoking and related problems can interfere with long term quality of life.

## **WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF SMOKING?**

Smoking weakens the immune system. It can make it harder to fight off HIV-related infections. This is especially true for infections related to the lungs. This is a risk for smoking marijuana as well as tobacco. Having HIV increases the risk of chronic lung disease.

Smoking can interfere with processing of medications by the liver. It can also worsen liver problems like hepatitis.

### **Smoking and Side Effects**

People with HIV who smoke are more likely to suffer complications from HIV medication than those who don't. For example, those who smoke are more likely to experience nausea and vomiting from taking HIV medications.

Smoking increases the risk of some long-term side effects of HIV disease and treatment. These include osteoporosis (weak bones that can lead to fractures, see fact sheet 557) and osteonecrosis (bone death, see fact sheet 559.) HIV treatment slightly increases the risk of heart attack, but smoking is the major controllable risk factor for heart attacks or strokes.

Recent studies found that quitting smoking reduced heart attack risk in HIV patients more than other factors such as changes in medications.

## **Smoking and Opportunistic Infections**

People with HIV disease who smoke are more likely to develop several opportunistic infections (see fact sheet 500) related to HIV. They are more likely to develop:

- thrush (see fact sheet 501)
- oral hairy leukoplakia (whitish mouth sores)
- bacterial pneumonia
- pneumocystis pneumonia (PCP, see fact sheet 515)

For women, smoking can increase the risk and severity of infection with human papilloma virus (HPV, see fact sheet 510). This increases the risk of cervical disease.

Recently, the bacteria that cause Mycobacterium avium complex (MAC, see fact sheet 514) were linked to smoking. They were found in tobacco, cigarette paper and filters even after they had been burned.

## **Smoking and Risk of Death**

A recent study found that smoking among people with HIV was linked to a higher rate of death. This was true for current smokers and ex-smokers. The greatest increase in the risk of death - 60% - was for cardiovascular (heart) disease and some cancers.

## **HOW DO I QUIT SMOKING?**

Smoking (nicotine) is highly addictive. It is very difficult to stop smoking. There is no one way to quit smoking. Different methods of quitting work better for different people. You and your doctor can develop a combination of approaches that work best for you.

Some people quit smoking "cold turkey." That is, they just stop smoking. Other people need some kind of support. This can be from medications that manage the physical symptoms of withdrawal. It might also be therapies that deal with the psychological addiction to smoking.

Nicotine withdrawal can be treated with medications. Some are available over the counter, while others require a prescription. Gums and lozenges that reduce nicotine cravings are often available over-the-counter. Prescription medications include inhalers and nasal sprays, and a pill. All these treat the physical and chemical symptoms of withdrawal.

Some people also get help in quitting smoking by:

- altering the routines that encourage them to smoke
- getting support to reduce outside factors like stress that encourage them to smoke
- participating in motivational groups

Some people have good success with alternative treatments like acupuncture, hypnosis and biofeedback.

## **THE BOTTOM LINE**

For people already infected, smoking can reduce the immune system's capabilities to fight infections.

There are many ways to quit smoking. You and your health care provider can discuss the ways that would work best for you.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

American Lung Association: (800) LUNG-USA or at <http://www.lungusa.org>

The American Cancer Society's Great American Smoke Out: follow link at <http://www.cancer.org/>

Gay American Smoke Out at <http://www.gaysmokeout.net/>

U.S. Health and Human Services – Information on Quitting: <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/tobacco/>

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