Healthy Living

Be Tobacco Free

Did you know that quitting tobacco is the single most important thing you can do to improve your health and protect the health of your family members? If you quit smoking or using other forms of tobacco, you and your family will experience health benefits in the short- and long-term.

What harm does tobacco use cause?

- Did you know that all forms of tobacco use are harmful? This includes cigars, pipes, snuff, snus, chewing tobacco, and electronic or smokeless cigarettes.
- In fact, tobacco and secondhand smoke kill approximately 443,000 people in the U.S. each year. It is the largest cause of preventable illness and death in the United States.
- Tobacco use causes cancers, heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). If you are pregnant, tobacco use can cause complications of pregnancy.

What is secondhand smoke and why is it a problem?

- You have probably heard of secondhand smoke. Secondhand smoke is inhaled by people when they are exposed to someone else who is smoking.
- There is no level of secondhand smoke that is safe. Even brief exposure is dangerous.
- Nonsmokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke at home or work are 20% to 30% more likely to develop heart disease or lung cancer.
- In babies and children, secondhand smoke is associated with sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), acute lung infections, ear problems, and more frequent and severe asthma attacks.
- If you already have heart disease, you are at especially high risk when you breathe secondhand smoke. It can have immediate harmful effects on your health and can increase the risk of heart attack.

What are the benefits of quitting smoking?

- Many good things happen as soon as you quit. You can feel good about protecting your health by quitting and protecting your family and friends from secondhand smoke.

A Better Way to **LIVE**

Talk with your health care team about your goals.

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- You will have more energy and breathe easier. And you will discover that food smells and tastes better since you quit.
- You can save money that you can spend on other things, like a vacation.
- You will notice that your clothes, car, and home smell better.
- You will look and feel better. You will have fewer wrinkles, and no stains on your skin and nails.

What are the benefits to my baby if I quit smoking while pregnant?

- Your baby will be healthier and will get more oxygen.
- Your baby will be less likely to be born too soon.
- Your baby will be more likely to come home from the hospital on the same day that you come home.
- Your baby will have fewer colds and ear infections, and will cough and cry less.
- Your baby will have fewer asthma and wheezing problems.

How do I get help with quitting tobacco?

- Talk with your VA health care team about help with quitting smoking. Your team can help you in several different ways which might include:
  - Medications and tips for quitting, such as setting a date, seeking support, and removing all smoking related things from your home.
  - Meeting with an expert on the team, such as the Health Behavior Coordinator, for support in quitting.
  - Joining a class with other Veterans who are also quitting, led by the hospital's expert in smoking cessation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- VHA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention: www.prevention.va.gov
- Quit Tobacco — Make Everyone Proud*: www.ucanquit2.org
- VA Public Health Strategic Health Care Group smoking cessation resources: http://www.publichealth.va.gov/smoking/
- Tobacco Cessation Quit line: 1-800-QUIT-NOW
- A government website with online resources to help you quit*: www.Smokefree.gov
- Healthfinder — Quit Smoking*: http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicId=24

* Indicates that the link leads to a non-VA website. The VA is not responsible for content on the site.

If you have questions about how to make healthy living changes, please talk with your health care team.