

Tobacco Use—A High-Risk Behavior

Cigarette-smoking is the leading cause of avoidable death in the United States, accounting for more deaths than AIDS, car crashes, suicides, homicides, fires, and illegal drugs combined. Fifty million Americans still smoke. Even worse is that teens are the nation's fastest-growing group of smokers.

HEALTH TERMS

addiction

nicotine

stimulant

tar

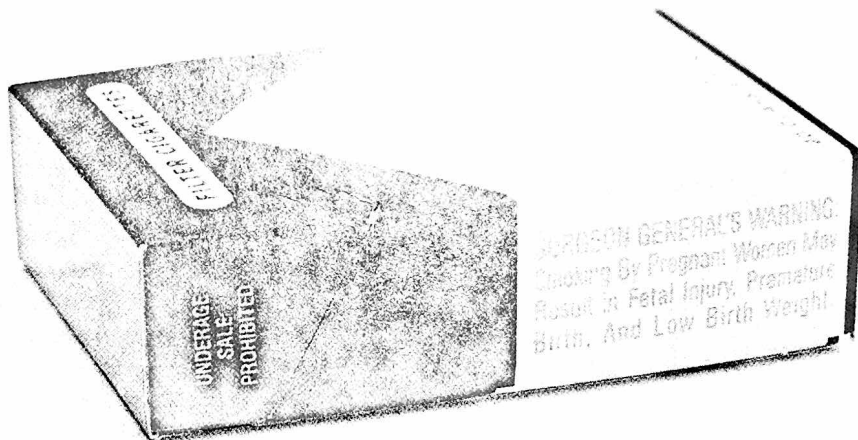
carcinogens

carbon monoxide

smokeless tobacco

HEALTH CONCEPTS

- Tobacco use is a high-risk behavior that can have serious health consequences.
- A number of factors affect young people's decisions to begin using tobacco.
- The only sure way to avoid getting addicted to nicotine is to never start using any tobacco product.



Why Young People Start Smoking

An estimated one in five American teens smokes, and about one million young people start smoking every year. Even though the message from the health community underscores the hazards of tobacco use to health, teens continue to smoke, chew, and dip tobacco in large numbers. Consider these troubling facts:

- Every day in the United States, 6,000 teens light up their first cigarette and another 3,000 teens become regular smokers.
- Approximately nine in ten adult smokers began smoking as teens and continue to smoke into adulthood, unable to stop.
- Of those who begin smoking as teens, one-third will eventually die from some smoke-related causes.
- About 2.6 million packs of cigarettes are sold illegally to minors in this country every day.

Statistics like these might leave you wondering why teens ever start to smoke. One major reason is that many feel insecure in social situations. Before they begin smoking, some teens believe that puffing on a cigarette will somehow remove their fears or insecurities, something a cigarette simply cannot do. They may also mistakenly believe smoking will make them seem older or more sophisticated than they are.

Many teens report that they start smoking because of **peer pressure** or because advertising on billboards and in magazines has made smoking seem attractive. They may associate specific brands with good-looking models, exciting settings such as the beach, or enjoyable activities such as parties, all of which may be portrayed in these ads.

Teens may smoke because they think the bad effects of smoking on health occur only after many years of smoking. They may not realize that health risks begin from the moment the cigarette smoke from the first cigarette enters the body.

Perhaps the greatest reason young people smoke is that they believe they can drop the habit at any time. They do not realize that for many smokers, smoking is no habit. Rather, it is an **addiction**—a *physiological or psychological dependence on a substance or activity*—that is difficult to shake. Still, some teens who realize that people sometimes get addicted to cigarettes feel certain that they are the exception and can stop at any time.

In a large survey of teens who smoke, half claimed they either definitely or probably would not be smoking after five years. They viewed it as a passing habit. The problem is that after five years of smoking, many of these same teens found that they had an addiction to cigarettes. Many adult smokers who began smoking as teens are still smoking—not because they want to be but because they are addicted.

What Is in Cigarettes?

Many forms of tobacco products are on the market, but cigarettes are still the most used product. With each puff of a cigarette, the smoker comes in contact with at least 43 chemicals known to cause cancer, among these cyanide, formaldehyde, and arsenic. The chemicals in tobacco can cause ailments other than cancer. Tobacco contains **nicotine**, the *addictive drug in cigarettes*. People smoke to



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peer pressure For more information on peer pressure and way of resisting pressure that is negative, see Chapter 13, page 304.

▼ **Even though more segments of society seem to be saying “Don’t smoke,” millions of Americans continue to light up.**

ACTIVITY *Discuss why you think smoking continues to be a leading cause of death.*

DEATHS FROM SMOKING

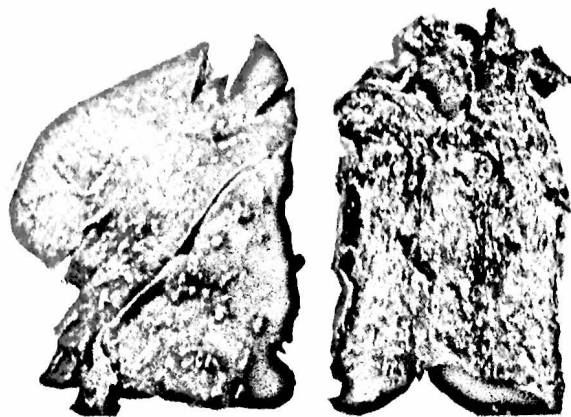
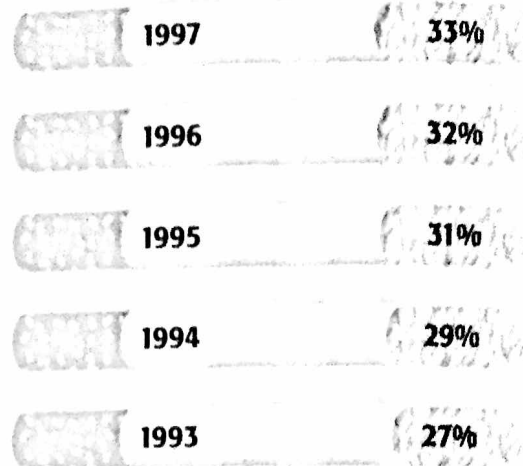
Smoking kills more Americans than all other causes shown below combined.

Smoking	420,000
Alcohol	105,000
Car accidents	46,000
Suicide	31,000
AIDS	30,000
Homicides	25,000
Illicit drugs	9,000
Fires	4,000

SOURCES: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Institute for Social Research

TEN REASONS TEENS START SMOKING

1. To seem more sophisticated, older, or more "cool"
2. Because of peer pressure
3. Due to the influence of advertising
4. Because teens believe they can quit at any time
5. For its short-term stimulant effect
6. To have something to handle or hold
7. For relaxation and stress relief
8. As a social crutch
9. To deal with other cravings
10. Because they see family members do it



Healthy lung

Smoke-damaged lung

SOURCE: The Monitoring the Future Study, The University of Michigan

▲ **There has been a steady increase in the rate of teens who smoke.**

Did You Know?

- ▶ Nicotine is a deadly poison that is used as an insecticide.
- ▶ Cigarettes contain formaldehyde, the same chemical used to preserve dead animals in biology class.
- ▶ Cigarettes also contain many of the same chemicals that make paint, toilet cleaner, and car antifreeze poisonous.
- ▶ Cigarette use has been tied to a common cause of blindness in the elderly, and a pack a day doubles that risk.

reduce the craving for nicotine, which is a poisonous stimulant. A **stimulant** is a drug that increases the action of the central nervous system, the heart, and other organs. Nicotine raises blood pressure and increases heart rate.

The flavor of a cigarette is due mostly to the tar in tobacco. **Tar** is a thick, sticky, dark fluid produced when tobacco burns. Tar penetrates the smoker's airways and lungs. Combined with the drying effect of cigarette smoke, tar paralyzes or destroys cilia, the waving hairlike projections that work to keep the respiratory tract clear. Several substances in tar are known as **carcinogens**, cancer-causing substances.

Low-tar, low-nicotine cigarettes, once advertised as safer than their standard counterparts, actually encourage the smoker to inhale more deeply and to smoke more cigarettes to maintain the body's accustomed nicotine levels.

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless, poisonous gas in cigarette smoke that passes through the lungs into the blood. This is the same gas in automobile exhaust fumes that, if inhaled, could prove fatal. It unites with the hemoglobin in red blood cells, preventing them from carrying the oxygen needed for energy to the body's cells.

Smokeless Tobacco

SSmokeless tobacco is *tobacco that is sniffed through the nose or chewed*. Over 12 million Americans are regular smokeless tobacco users, and the use of these products continues to increase, especially among teenagers, many of whom start chewing tobacco or dipping snuff between the ages of 13 and 15. Advertisements featuring famous people, especially athletes, give the false impression that smokeless products contribute to an image of being "macho" or "cool." There is nothing cool, however, about the brown-stained teeth or unsightly spitting of tobacco juice that are part of this habit. Many teens also wrongly believe that smokeless tobacco is safer than cigarettes because it does not involve taking in smoke or putting it back into the air. In truth, smokeless tobacco carries many of the same health risks as smoking cigarettes, including addiction to nicotine. Other health risks associated with chewing or dipping include mouth sores that can turn into cancer of the lip, mouth or throat; damage to teeth and gums; and damage to the digestive system.

Other Forms of Tobacco

Like smoking cigarettes, smoking pipes or cigars also presents major health risks. Although pipe and cigar smokers usually inhale less smoke, they are more likely to develop cancers of the lip, mouth, and throat because more tar and other chemicals are generated by pipes and cigars. If the pipe or cigar smoker makes it a habit to inhale the smoke, his or her chances of developing lung cancer also increase.



The Benefits of Being a Nonsmoker

Being tobacco-free means:

- being able to take a deep breath
- being able to taste food and having the full sense of smell
- having endurance and energy during physical activity
- being able to use money for other things
- being free from addiction to nicotine
- reducing the risks of heart disease, cancer, and leading respiratory diseases
- feeling good that you are not polluting the air of those around you

Did You Know?

- ▶ Smokeless tobacco sends ten times the carcinogens into the bloodstream as cigarettes do.
- ▶ One can of snuff contains as much nicotine as about 60 cigarettes.
- ▶ From 1991 to 1997, the number of women who smoked cigars tripled to about 400,000.
- ▶ In the 1950s, the oral cancer ratio of men to women was 5 to 1, but in 1997, it was 2 to 1.
- ▶ Two of the most common causes of oral cancer, or cancer of the mouth, are drinking alcohol and smoking cigars. Together, they are even more deadly.

Specialty Cigarettes

Specialty cigarettes are those prepared with tobacco and other ingredients. They are often made with strong tobacco and contain spices that make them taste and smell sweet. However, the effects they can have on the body of the user are anything but sweet. Experts say that specialty cigarettes contain more cancer-causing tars than standard cigarettes. Clove cigarettes, one such specialty product, have been linked to lung problems and possible deaths and may have as much as two times the tar and nicotine as regular cigarettes.

SHEDDING LIGHT ON LIGHTING UP

The use of cigars is a growing fad and addiction among many Americans, including teens. From 1993 to 1996, the sales of larger cigars grew 45 percent to 4.5 billion. One national sample taken by the CDC showed that 27 percent of students had tried at least one cigar within the past year. However, cigars are not the safe alternative to cigarettes that many teens mistakenly assume they are. In fact, cigar smokers are 34 percent more likely to die from some form of cancer than nonsmokers and four to ten times more likely than are nonsmokers to die of cancer of the throat, mouth, or larynx. Though many states ban cigar sales to those under age, their sales to minors continue to increase.