

# Women's Health **UPDATE**

## Nicotine Addiction: A Women's Health Crisis

(NAPSA)—Cigarette smoking kills more than 173,000 women in the United States each year. In addition to the risks both men and women face from smoking, women are at risk for a unique set of complications, including certain cancers and problems with fertility and pregnancy.

In addition, a recent study showed that smoking is even more dangerous to women's hearts than men's. In fact, women who smoke have heart attacks nearly 14 years earlier than women who don't smoke. But for men, the difference is much smaller. Male smokers have heart attacks about six years earlier than men who don't smoke.

### A Cycle of Addiction

Even with all these risks, many women continue to smoke cigarettes. In fact, in the United States, 17.4 percent of adult women currently smoke. This may be because cigarettes contain a very addictive chemical called nicotine.

"Many women who smoke understand the risks, but they become dependent on nicotine because of the feelings of satisfaction and pleasure it gives them," explained Patricia Nez Henderson, M.D., MPH, vice president, Black Hills Center for American Indian Health. "They also get into a daily routine, like taking smoke

### Reducing Health Risks

- Cigarette smoking kills more than 173,000 women in the United States each year.
- Within five years of quitting, a woman's risk of dying may decrease by 13 percent.
- 20 years after quitting smoking, a woman's overall risk of dying may decrease to the level of a nonsmoker. 

breaks with co-workers or smoking after meals, and it becomes incredibly hard to break out of those patterns."

### Overcoming the Urge

When smokers try to quit, they may experience withdrawal symptoms that cause them to slip up and have a cigarette.

People trying to quit can:

- Work with a doctor to set up and stick to a quit plan.
- Ask friends and family to help them stay away from cigarettes and "triggers" that make them want to smoke.
- Take medication to help quit smoking and participate in counseling.

"If a woman is considering quitting, the best thing she can do is tell her doctor she's ready. Together, they can come up with a

plan that fits her lifestyle and needs," added Dr. Henderson.

### It's Never Too Late

At any stage of life, smokers can decrease their health risks by quitting. Also, women who quit smoking before becoming pregnant or trying to become pregnant can reduce the risk of infertility, miscarriage, low birth weight and infant heart defects.

Examples of the potential impact on a smoker's health from quitting include:

- Within five years, a woman's risk of dying may decrease by 13 percent.
- Within five years, the excess risk of death from coronary heart disease decreases 62 percent; cerebrovascular disease (stroke) decreases 42 percent, and lung cancer decreases 21 percent.
- Within 10 years of quitting, the risk of dying of respiratory disease decreases by 18 percent.

Twenty years after quitting smoking, a woman's overall risk of dying may decrease to the level of a nonsmoker.

To learn more about how to quit smoking, visit [www.mytimetoquit.com](http://www.mytimetoquit.com) for resources including a useful checklist to make it easier to talk to a doctor about quitting.

This information is courtesy of Pfizer Inc.