

LUNG CANCER AWARENESS

HEALTH CARE OBSERVANCE



Lung Cancer Awareness Month

“Do Patches, e-cigarettes and pills help seniors quit smoking, too?”

Tobacco is the #1 risk factor for lung cancer. Learn more about how to help your senior stop smoking to reduce their risk of lung cancer and benefit from improved health.

Tobacco Use and Cancer

Tobacco use can lead to nicotine and tobacco dependency in addition to serious health problems like cancer. Cancer is a group of diseases where normal cells change, grow and divide. This growth creates problems such as the development of a mass or tumor.

Lung cancer is a type of cancer that begins in the lungs and can be related to smoking cigarettes. Quitting smoking greatly reduces the risk of developing lung cancer and other smoking-related diseases.

Tobacco and tobacco smoke contain more than 7,000 chemicals, including 60 known carcinogens. A known carcinogen is a cancer causing agent. Tobacco is in cigarettes, cigars, chewing and pipe tobacco. These chemicals cause damage to the body in the cells and genes.

Smoking can be an incredibly challenging habit to quit and helping your aging parent or older adult quit may be even more difficult. Below we review how tobacco causes cancer, the benefits and symptoms of quitting smoking, methods of quitting smoking and how caregivers can help their loved one or senior stop the habit for good.

How does tobacco cause cancer?

Our bodies typically have systems that regulate cell growth. Smoking causes this regulation to malfunction, leading to uncontrolled growth. This uncontrolled growth can lead to the development of tumors that grow and spread because they are not detected or repaired by the body's normal systems.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of death from cancer deaths in the United States. Deaths from lung cancer are greater than deaths from colon, prostate, ovarian and breast cancers combined. Tobacco and tobacco smoke are the number one risk factor for lung cancer. In the United States, cigarette smoking is linked to 80% to 90% of lung cancers (source).

Benefits and symptoms of quitting smoking

(www.cancer.org)

Quitting smoking has immediate health benefits. Quitting smoking at any age can lower your risk of lung cancer. The risk of getting lung cancer reduces immediately after you stop smoking and continues to decrease the more tobacco-free years you have.

Within minutes of smoking your last cigarette, the body begins to restore itself. **You'll notice instant rewards after quitting and even more will occur the more you are tobacco-free:**

- Food tastes better
- Sense of smell returns
- Breath, hair and clothes smell better
- Teeth and fingernails stop yellowing
- Heart rate and blood pressure drop
- Circulation improves
- Lungs work better
- Less damage to premature aging such as wrinkling of skin and tooth loss
- Carbon monoxide levels in your blood drops to normal
- Less shortness of breath

Some individuals may experience negative side effects when they quit smoking. **These can vary and can include:**

- Weight gain. Most people may gain 7 to 10 lbs but their overall health is still in much better condition.
- Withdrawal symptoms including trouble sleeping, feeling anxious and difficulty concentrating.
- Coughing or other cold symptoms such as sneezing, headache, earache or sore throat.

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With so many options to quit smoking, which method is best?

Medications can double a person's chances of quitting permanently. They can help with withdrawal symptoms, reduce cravings and save money. Typically, these medications are used for a shorter amount of time, resulting in spending less money on medications than cigarettes. With so many options to choose from, which is best for your loved one?

Food & Drug Administration Approved Medication Guide (www.smokefree.gov)

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)

Method	Availability	Description
Nicotine Patches	Over-the-Counter	The nicotine patch is placed on the skin and gives users a small and steady amount of nicotine.
Nicotine Gum	Over-the-Counter	Nicotine gum is chewed to release nicotine. The user chews the gum until it produces a tingling feeling, and then places it between their cheek and gums.
Nicotine Lozenges	Over-the-Counter	Nicotine lozenges look like hard candy and are placed in the mouth. The nicotine lozenge releases nicotine as it slowly dissolves in the mouth.
Nicotine Inhaler	Prescription	A nicotine inhaler is a cartridge attached to a mouthpiece. Inhaling through the mouthpiece gives the user a specific amount of nicotine.
Nicotine Nasal Spray	Prescription	Nicotine nasal spray is a pump bottle containing nicotine, which is put into the nose and sprayed.
E-cigarettes	Over-the-Counter	Quitting smoking through e-cigarettes is NOT considered a healthy option at this time. These products are currently not regulated by the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and scientists are still researching the health effects of using e-cigarettes. (www.smokefree.gov)

Other Quit Smoking Medications

Method	Availability	Description
Bupropion	Prescription	Bupropion, also known as Zyban®, helps to reduce nicotine withdrawal and the urge to smoke. Bupropion can be used safely with NRT.
Varenicline	Prescription	Varenicline, also known as Chantix®, helps to reduce nicotine withdrawal and the urge to smoke. It also blocks the effects of nicotine from cigarettes if the user starts smoking again.



Home Care Tip:

The first 7 to 10 days are usually the toughest for smokers. Stay closest during this time to give them the support and encouragement they need. Most people who return to smoking do so within the first three months of quitting, so be patient with them and continue to encourage them for the long haul.

How to quit—helping your seniors or loved one quit smoking

As a caregiver, you can play a vital role in helping your older adult quit smoking and remain smoke-free. If an individual wants to quit smoking, they have already made a huge leap. Smokers are more successful at quitting if they have support through this time. Encourage them even if they have tried to quit before that they can stick with it this time.



The first couple of days they may just need support. Be someone they can talk to, stop by and check in on them. See how they are doing and feeling. Don't nag or scold them, but affirm them in their decision. Be sure to remind them that the path to quit smoking is taken one day at a time.



Carry your favorite snack like chewing gum, hard candy or a handful of almonds to help reduce their chance of reaching for a cigarette (smokefree.gov) or indulging in the craving.



Offer simple rewards for getting through the first day, the first week and the first month. Rewards can be small and simple but something for them to look forward to and will continue to encourage them.



Do things with them for getting through the first day, the first week and the first month. Rewards can be small and simple but something for them to look forward to and will continue to encourage them.



Help them with weight gain. After quitting smoking, some people will gain weight. This is usually due to an increase in appetite. Remind them that overall they are in better health. Do physical activities together and help them choose low-fat, healthy snack options.