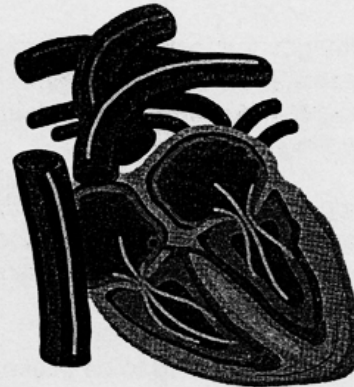


SMOKING AND YOUR CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

What is cardiovascular disease?

Damage or disease of the heart, arteries, veins and smaller blood vessels are all cardiovascular diseases. Cigarette smoking, high blood pressure (hypertension) and high blood cholesterol are the three major modifiable causes of cardiovascular disease.



What are the added risks from smoking?

Stroke

- ◆ Smokers of less than 20 cigarettes a day are 2 – 3 times as likely to suffer a stroke as non-smokers. Smokers of more than 20 cigarettes a day are up to 6 times as likely to have a stroke
- ◆ Smokers who also have hypertension are up to 20 times as likely to suffer a stroke
- ◆ Women who smoke and use oral contraceptive pills are 22 times as likely to have a stroke as women who do neither

Heart Disease

- ◆ Smoking increases the chance of having an angina attack (severe chest pain or pressure)
- ◆ The risk of having a heart attack is doubled in smokers
- ◆ Smokers are 2 – 4 times as likely to suffer from some form of coronary heart disease as are non-smokers
- ◆ Smokers have a 70% greater coronary heart disease death rate, and are 2 – 4 times the risk of sudden death as non-smokers
- ◆ Smokers who have hypertension and high cholesterol are at up to 13 times the risk of experiencing heart disease as are people without any of these three risk factors

- ◆ Smokers who also have a family history of cardiovascular disease (CVD) have a greatly increased risk. It has been estimated that 68% of CVD deaths in men who have a family history of heart attack were the result of a combination of family history and smoking
- ◆ Women who smoke and use oral contraceptive pills are 39 times more likely to have a heart attack as women who do neither
- ◆ The death rate from aortic aneurysms is 2 – 8 times higher in smokers than non-smokers. An aortic aneurysm is a weakening of part of the wall of the major blood vessels which carries blood from the heart to the rest of the body. This can cause the wall of the artery to leak or burst, which is usually fatal

Peripheral Vascular Disease

- ◆ Smokers have a higher risk of peripheral vascular disease (smoker's foot) which causes pain in the legs and can lead to gangrene and amputation. Nine out of ten people who have this disease are smokers
- ◆ Smokers who continue to smoke after surgery to leg arteries have 30 times the risk of losing their leg in comparison with non-smokers

How does smoking increase the risk of cardiovascular disease?

Cigarette smoking:

- ◆ Damages the inner walls of your blood vessels, leading to blockages (atherosclerosis), particularly if you also have high cholesterol
- ◆ Reduces the ratio of high-density lipoprotein (HDL-C) in your blood, contributing to blockage of the arteries (atherosclerosis)
- ◆ Causes your blood to be thicker and to clot more easily, increasing the likelihood of blockages in the blood vessels in the heart and brain
- ◆ Causes narrowing of your blood vessels (vasoconstriction), which further decrease the amount of blood flowing in the blood vessels
- ◆ Reduces the amount of oxygen available to your heart and other muscles
- ◆ Makes your heart beat faster and increases your heart's demand for oxygen

If you would like some more information about the effects of smoking or about how to quit, please ask your nurse, pharmacist or doctor.



The benefits of stopping smoking

- ◆ If you have angina you will notice an immediate improvement
- ◆ If you have high blood pressure and you quit smoking, many anti-hypertensive medications will be more effective
- ◆ One year after quitting, your risk of having a heart attack is halved. Within 10 – 15 years of stopping, your risk of heart attack is no higher than that of someone who has never smoked
- ◆ If you have already had a heart attack and give up smoking, you halve your risk of having another heart attack
- ◆ If you quit smoking before bypass surgery, your risk of post-operative lung complications is reduced
- ◆ Your risk of having a stroke starts to drop soon after quitting. Within 5 to 10 years of stopping, your risk of a stroke is the same as that of a non-smoker
- ◆ If you have already had a stroke and quit smoking, your risk of a second stroke is only half what it would be if you continued to smoke
- ◆ Stopping smoking reduces your risk of developing peripheral vascular disease
- ◆ If you already have peripheral vascular disease but quit smoking now, your treatment is more likely to be successful. Quitting smoking greatly improves exercise tolerance, greatly reduces the risk of amputation after peripheral artery bypass surgery and increases overall survival
- ◆ Smokers who quit sometimes gain some weight. However the benefit from quitting to the cardiovascular system is greater than the disadvantage which may result from weight gain

**Mid North Coast Area Health Service
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