Smoking and Respiratory Diseases

Facts about smoking and respiratory diseases:
Diseases caused by smoking kill more than 430,000 people in the US each year. In fact, smoking is directly responsible for the majority of lung cancer cases (87 percent), emphysema cases, and chronic bronchitis cases. Even with anti-smoking campaigns and medical health disclaimers in place, many people continue to smoke or start to smoke every year. According to the American Cancer Society, 90 percent of new smokers are children and teenagers, in many cases, replacing the smokers who quit or died prematurely from a smoking-related disease.

What are the risks associated with smoking?
Smokers not only increase their risk of lung disease, including lung cancer, but they also increase their risk of other illnesses, including heart disease, emphysema, stroke, and oral cancer. Risks from smoking, as they relate to lung disease, may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **chronic bronchitis**
  Chronic bronchitis, a long-term inflammation of the bronchi (large airways), is characterized by coughing productively over a long period of time.

- **emphysema**
  Emphysema, a chronic lung condition that affects the air sacs in the lungs (alveoli), is characterized by shortness of breath, coughing, fatigue, sleep and heart problems, weight loss, and depression.

- **lung cancer**
  Lung cancer, an abnormal, continual multiplying of cells that can result in lumps, masses, or tumors, can begin in the lining of the bronchi (large airways), or other areas of the respiratory system. Lung cancer may cause a cough as the tumor grows. Other symptoms may include constant chest pain, shortness of pain, wheezing, recurring lung infections, bloody or rust-colored sputum, hoarseness, swelling of the neck and face, pain and weakness in the shoulder, arm, or hand, and unexplained fever. Smoking, including secondhand smoke, is the leading cause of lung cancer.

The symptoms of smoking-related lung diseases may resemble other lung conditions or medical problems. Always consult your physician for a diagnosis.

How dangerous is secondhand smoke?
Secondhand smoke, smoke that is exhaled by smokers and smoke emitted from the burning end of a lit cigarette, cigar, or pipe, causes nearly 3,000 lung cancer deaths each year in persons who do not smoke themselves. Also called involuntary or passive smoking, secondhand smoke can also lead to heart disease. The following are some of the most common symptoms associated with exposure to secondhand smoke. However, each individual may experience symptoms differently. Symptoms may include:

- irritation of the eyes, nose, and throat
- coughing
- excessive phlegm (mucus in the airways)
- chest discomfort or pain
Children and infants exposed to tobacco smoke are more likely to experience ear infections, and asthma, and are at a higher risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) than children and infants without the same exposure.

The symptoms of secondhand smoke may resemble other medical conditions and problems. Always consult your physician for a diagnosis.

**What are the benefits of quitting smoking?**

People who quit smoking can actually reverse some of the damage that has been done to their lungs over an extended period of time. Other benefits of quitting smoking may include the following:

- decreased risk of lung disease
- decreased risk of heart disease
- decreased risk of cancer
- reduced cigarette stains on fingers and teeth
- reduced occurrence of a hacking cough
- elimination of stale cigarettes smell on clothing and hair
- improved smell and taste

**How does cigar smoking affect a person's risk of lung cancer and other types of cancer?**

Cigars became a trend in the 1990s, attracting the young and the old. Perceived as less detrimental to one's health, cigars actually pose the same, if not greater, risk as cigarettes for oral cancer. Although many cigar smokers do not inhale, their risk for oral, throat, and esophageal cancers is the same as for cigarette smokers. Consider these facts:

- Compared with nonsmokers, cigar smokers who inhale are eight times more likely to develop oral cancer, four to 10 times more likely to develop esophageal cancer, and 10 times more likely to develop laryngeal cancer.
- Cigar smokers who inhale and smoke five cigars a day run the same lung cancer risk as one-pack-a-day cigarette smokers.
- Secondhand smoke from cigars contains toxins and cancer-causing agents (carcinogens) similar to secondhand cigarette smoke, but in higher concentrations.

**A non-nicotine option to quit smoking: Zyban**

Zyban, a non-nicotine alternative to help people stop smoking, was approved in 1996 by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Offered to smokers who want to quit, Zyban (Bupropion HCl), in pill form, has been shown to alter mood transmitters in the brain that are linked to addiction. Zyban must be prescribed by a physician and may not be appropriate for everyone. Consult your physician for more information.

**Quitting smoking:**

Quitting smoking is both a mental and a physical undertaking. Mentally, you should be ready and relatively stress-free. Physically, you need to commit to exercising daily and getting plenty of sleep. A person trying to quit must overcome two obstacles: a physical addition to nicotine and a habit. The American Academy of Otolaryngology and the American Lung Association offer the following tips to help users quit using tobacco products:

1. Think about why you want to quit.
2. Pick a stress-free time to quit.
3. Ask for support and encouragement from family, friends, and colleagues.
4. Begin a daily exercise or activity to relieve stress and improve your health.
5. Get plenty of rest.
6. Eat a balanced diet.
7. Join a smoking cessation program, or other support group.
In some cases, smokers benefit from nicotine replacement products to help break their smoking habit. Nicotine replacement products continue to give the smoker nicotine, although in smaller quantities than a cigarette, to meet their nicotine craving. However, the benefit of nicotine replacement products is the elimination of tars and poisonous gases that cigarettes emit. Pregnant or nursing women, and people with other medical conditions, should consult with their physician before using any nicotine replacement products. Some examples of nicotine replacement products include:

- **nicotine chewing gum** - an over-the-counter chewing gum that releases small amounts of nicotine to help reduce nicotine withdrawal symptoms.
- **nicotine patch** - an over-the-counter patch applied to the upper body once a day that releases a steady dosage of nicotine to help reduce the urge to smoke.
- **nicotine inhaler or nasal spray** - a prescription nicotine replacement product that releases nicotine to help reduce withdrawal symptoms (requires a physician's approval before use).