

Women's *Heart Advantage*

Heart Healthy Information: Women and Cigarettes

Cigarette smoking has been described as “the most important health risk in this country.” Women who smoke are up to six times more likely to suffer a heart attack than nonsmoking women. They also have an increased risk of suffering a stroke.

Cigarette smoking greatly increases the chances that a woman will develop lung cancer. Lung cancer has increased 500 percent in women in the last 20 years, and more women die of it than breast cancer. Second-hand smoke also causes numerous health problems in family, friends and co-workers.

There is simply **no safe way to smoke**. Though low-tar and low-nicotine cigarettes may reduce the lung cancer risk, they *do not* reduce the chance of heart disease or other smoking-related diseases.

Why kick the habit?

The good news is that quitting smoking greatly reduces the chance of heart disease and other serious disorders. Just one year after quitting smoking, the risk of heart disease will drop by about half. After several years, the risk is about the same for women who never smoked. If you already have heart disease or have had a heart attack, giving up cigarettes

will lower your risk of a first or second heart attack.

How does one cigarette hurt?

Just one cigarette can keep the heart from using oxygen properly for up to 24 hours. It releases enough poison to make the side of a blood vessel wall in the heart rough, which will start or increase the narrowing of the blood vessel and reduce the blood flow to the heart muscle and the body.

Women who smoke

Women who smoke and use birth control pills are up to 20 times more likely to suffer from heart disease and have a greater risk for stroke than nonsmokers. Smoking causes lower hormone levels in women, which can cause menstrual problems, early menopause and bone weakness. Smoking also causes the average woman to die 14.5 years earlier than nonsmoking women.

In addition, women who smoke have more wrinkles and look older. They have three times higher risk of developing heart disease and lung cancer than men who smoke. Women also have a much higher level of damage to their lungs and heart, causing more diseases.

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Santa Cruz
Medical Foundation

A Sutter Health Affiliate

Women's Heart Advantage is an educational program sponsored by the doctors, nurses and hospitals of Sutter Health to raise awareness of women's heart disease, risk factors, early detection, and treatment. This information is provided to help you understand how certain factors can affect your chances for heart disease and how to help control them. For more information, visit www.hearts.sutterhealth.org.

How to quit

Get ready to quit —

This is an important first step, and you must be motivated.

Line up support —

Ask friends and family to help you quit.

Avoid smoking traps —

Know and avoid situations where you would normally smoke.

Find new habits —

Replace the traps with those not associated with smoking.

Keep busy —

Do activities with your hands, such as needlework or jigsaw puzzles.

Find other “mouth” activities —

Eat vegetable sticks, apple slices or chew sugarless gum.

Keep moving —

Walk, garden, bike, or do some yoga stretches. Being active makes you feel better and helps to prevent weight gain.

Know what to expect —

In the first week, you may experience temporary withdrawal symptoms, such as headaches, irritability, tiredness, and trouble concentrating. These are signs that your body is recovering from the effects of smoking and will most likely end within two to four weeks.

Ask for help —

The American Lung Association and the American Cancer Society, hospitals, offices and community groups have programs for support.

Be good to yourself —

Get plenty of rest, drink lots of water, and eat three healthy meals daily. Congratulate yourself for making a major, positive change in your life.

If you “Slip” — it’s not unusual —

Get right back on the nonsmoking track:

Don’t be discouraged —

It doesn’t mean you can’t quit.

Keep thinking of yourself as a nonsmoker.

You are one.

Learn from experience —

What made you light a cigarette? Avoid it in the future.

Take charge —

Decide what you can do the next time you want to smoke to keep you from doing it again.

Aids for quitting —

From nicotine gum to patches and medications, there are options available to help you quit smoking. Some are covered by insurance. Talk to your doctor about your choices.

A weight concern —

Most ex-smokers gain less than 10 pounds. Choose lower calorie foods and increase physical activity.



Sutter Health

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The Sutter Health family includes: Alta Bates Summit Medical Center, California Pacific Medical Center, Eden Medical Center, Marin General Hospital, Memorial Medical Center, Memorial Hospital Los Banos, Mills-Peninsula Health Services, Novato Community Hospital, Palo Alto Medical Foundation including Camino Medical Group and Santa Cruz Medical Clinic, St. Luke’s Hospital, Sutter Amador Hospital, Sutter Auburn Faith Hospital, Sutter Coast Hospital, Sutter Davis Hospital, Sutter Delta Medical Center, Sutter Gould Medical Foundation, Sutter Lakeside Hospital, Sutter Maternity & Surgery Center of Santa Cruz, Sutter Medical Center, Sacramento, Sutter Medical Center of Santa Rosa, Sutter Medical Foundation, Sutter Medical Foundation - North Bay, Sutter North Medical Foundation, Sutter Regional Medical Foundation, Sutter Roseville Medical Center, Sutter Solano Medical Center, Sutter Tracy Community Hospital, Sutter Warrack Hospital, and Sutter VNA & Hospice.
