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DEADLY, DANGEROUS DRUG

Each day, millions of people spend time ingesting a cocktail of chemicals that cause irreversible damage to their heart, lungs, air passages, and brain. A recent study showed that over 17 percent of high school students were “current” cigarette smokers. Some people start smoking because they think it makes them look cool, or because their friends are doing it. No matter why people start smoking, most smokers continue to harm their own bodies simply because they can’t quit. The addictive drug that is present in cigarettes, chews, and other forms of tobacco practically force a person to keep using, even when he knows that he is opening the door to a wide range of

different cancers and respiratory diseases. No one argues that tobacco is dangerous, but you may not know just what it does to the body.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TOBACCO

Humans have been chewing and smoking tobacco for centuries, attracted by the mild psychoactive effects of the nicotine contained in the plant’s leaves. It wasn’t until the mid-20th century that science advanced to the point where it could accurately quantify the negative short- and long-term effects of tobacco on the entire body. When smokers realized that tobacco companies had been selling and marketing a product that was packed full of cancer-causing chemicals and highly addictive drugs, they sought and won a massive class-action lawsuit that changed the cigarette industry forever. The verdict in the case demanded an end to cigarette advertisements and depictions in television and movies, and also implemented a requirement for every pack of cigarettes and every printed advertisement to carry a large, boldly lettered warning about tobacco’s destructive effect on health. Today, public pressure has caused tobacco companies to stop advertising their products altogether, and government agencies continue to use new methods like high sales taxes and photographs of lung cancer to make smoking as undesirable as possible.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Go to www.intheknowzone.com for more information on substance abuse. Increase your knowledge using the information, statistics, images, and links. Test your understanding with a quick quiz.

**Don’t stay in the dark.
Get In the Know!**

in the know

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P.O. Box 6986 Metairie, LA 70009 • 877-329-0578
www.ESPublish.com • product #PB-DA182
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TOBACCO

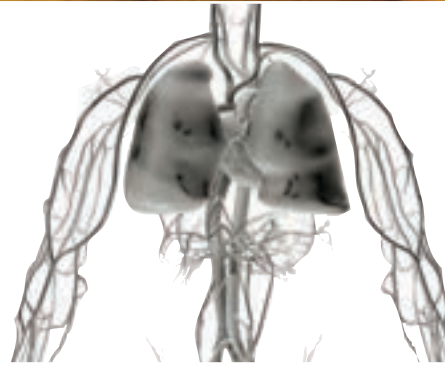
*how it affects
the body*



HOW TOBACCO ENTERS THE BODY

There are several different methods for ingesting tobacco into the body. Products like chews and dips deliver nicotine through the gums. Smoking vaporizes the chemicals in tobacco into smoke and sends them through the airways and lungs, where they are absorbed into the bloodstream. The primary active drug, nicotine, then travels to the brain and creates an artificial sense of pleasure by releasing hormones.

Nicotine is not the only substance in tobacco, though. As cigarette smoke travels through the mouth, throat, larynx, esophagus, and lungs, it leaves behind a residue containing thousands of other dangerous chemicals, including carbon monoxide, cyanide, ammonia, and formaldehyde. This coating is the main source of the respiratory diseases directly connected to tobacco use.



RESPIRATORY DISEASE

Living with chronic respiratory disease, such as emphysema, means dealing with painful consequences every moment, day and night, for the rest of one's life. The well-known "smoker's cough" and hoarse voice are evidence that the respiratory tract's protective walls and the sensitive structure of the larynx ("voice box") have been permanently corroded and broken down by the toxic chemicals that comprise tobacco smoke. Coughing fits, sleep loss, asthma, constant breathing difficulty, and a multitude of other diseases are constant reminders of the cost of smoking.

HEART DISEASE

As nicotine travels through the bloodstream, blood vessels contract. This unnecessary pressure on the heart and arteries causes them to wear out far more quickly than they would normally, and is a huge influence in the well-documented shortened life span of smokers. In addition to causing coronary heart disease, tobacco use also damages the arteries leading to the arms and legs. This restriction in blood flow causes painful diseases like gangrene and loss of tissue, sometimes requiring amputation of fingers, toes, arms and even legs.

Smoking does not just affect smokers - it spreads deadly chemicals to everyone around them.

THE BRAIN AND ADDICTION

In time, the brain becomes accustomed to the altering effects of nicotine and reacts adversely when it is not provided. This condition is addiction, and it is difficult for those who have never experienced it to understand. It causes a person to continue taking the drug even with a full understanding of its destructive nature. The power of nicotine addiction is so strong that entire products, government agencies, and companies exist for the sole purpose of helping people fight it.

SECOND HAND SMOKE AFFECTS OTHERS

Scientists have only recently been able to put some of the effects of secondhand smoke into numbers, and the data is more disturbing than they had anticipated. All of the long term health risks of smoking—lung cancer, heart disease, and respiratory diseases—are also carried by secondhand smoke. Children, whose bodily systems are delicate while developing, are highly vulnerable to these threats and often develop lifelong health problems by inhaling cigarette smoke. This means that smoking does not just affect smokers—it spreads deadly chemicals to everyone around them.

OTHER CONSEQUENCES

Americans spent over \$83 billion on cigarettes each year. Smoking is a very expensive habit, and the money spent on cigarettes does not



lung cancer

just "go up in smoke"—it injects destructive chemicals into the body that will later cost even more money to medically treat.

Finally, blowing a cloud of chemicals into the air and carrying a residual cigarette smoke odor is a sure way to drive away friends and family members.

DON'T START, QUIT OR DIE

Pretty harsh choices, but when it comes to using tobacco there aren't very many healthy, good outcomes. Your best bet is to stay far away from tobacco. If you don't use tobacco, consider yourself lucky and don't start. If you do use tobacco, do yourself and everyone else a favor and quit.

LUNG CANCER

Eighty to ninety percent of lung cancer cases are directly caused by tobacco. There is no cure for this devastating illness, and it shortens the life span of its victims while making every breath a painful experience. Sadly, tobacco-related lung cancer is entirely preventable, yet hospitals and insurance companies spend millions of dollars every year treating patients for it.

respiratory diseases

toxic chemicals

