



## RESOURCES

Center for Disease Control  
<http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco>

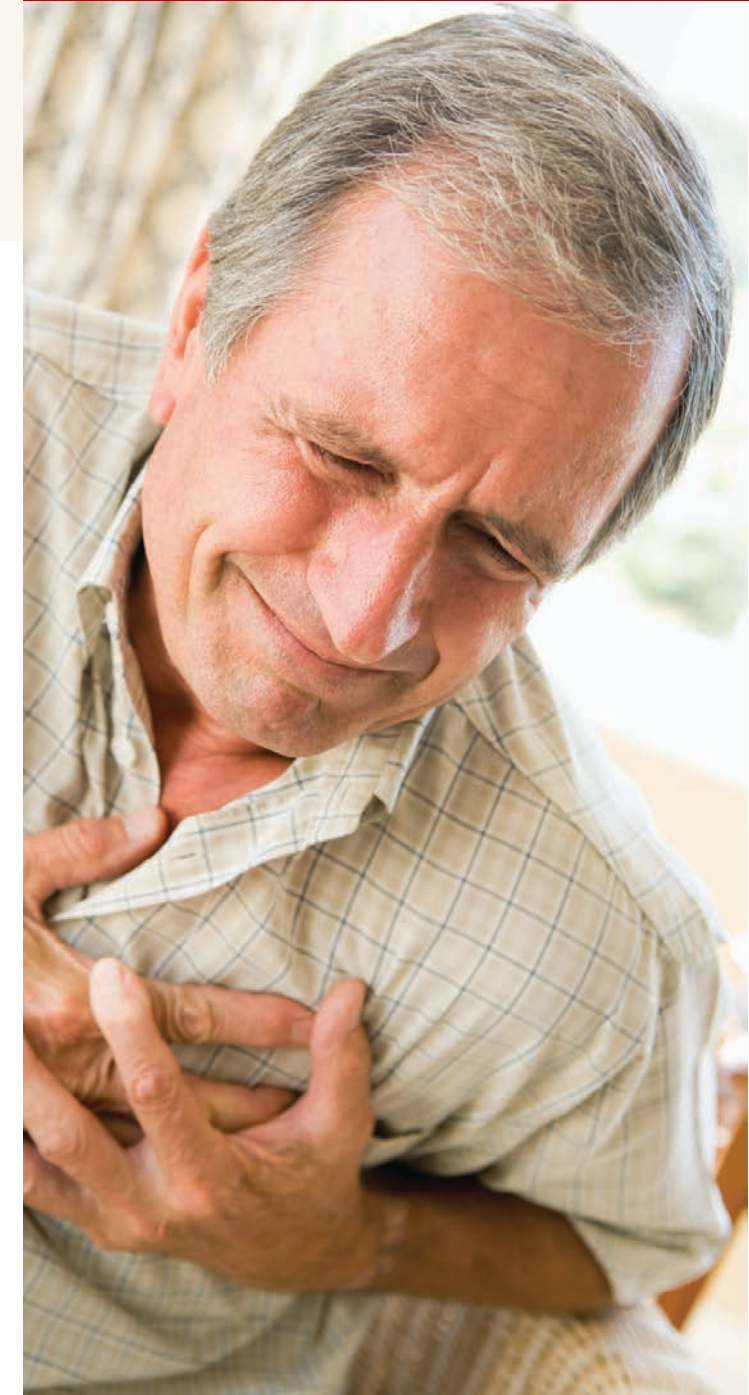
Telephone:  
1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)  
1-855-DÉJELO-YA (1-855-335-3569) (Español)

Text:  
Text QUITNOW to 333888  
Texto DÉJELOYA al 333888 (Español)

App:  
Download the quitSTART app

## >INFOCUS

# SMOKING *and your heart*



## Do you smoke?

**Kicking the smoking habit can be hard, but the health benefits far outweigh the struggle to be tobacco free. Most people associate smoking with lung cancer and other breathing diseases. While the risks to the lungs and other parts of the body are high, smoking has a devastating effect on a person's heart and blood vessels.**

### Your Heart Pays the Price

Smoking is responsible for over 480,000 deaths in this country each year. Smoking is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease. 20% of smoking-related deaths are caused by heart disease and smokers are two to four times more likely to get heart disease. The more a person smokes, the higher the risk. Smoking increases the risk of having a heart attack, and the longer a person smokes, the greater the risk. Smokers who have a heart attack are more likely to die from that heart attack than non-smokers. Smoking doubles a person's risk of having a stroke.

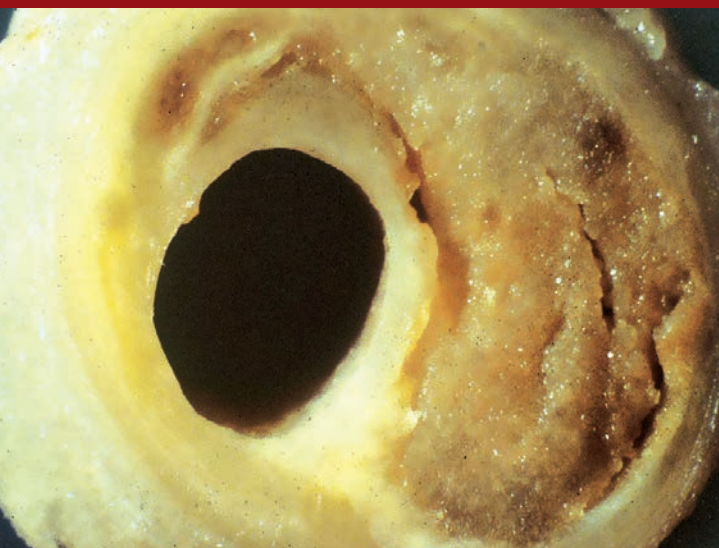
Smoking affects the flow of blood around your body and through your heart. This can lead to a loss of circulation in the body's extremities, resulting in impotence, gangrene and in some cases amputation.

**Heart disease is the number one killer in this country. Cigarette smoking is the number one preventable cause of premature death.**

## GET YOUR LIFE >INFOCUS

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Cross section of coronary artery with atherosclerosis

## Taking Aim at the Lungs

Most of smoking's damage to the cardiovascular system starts within blood vessels.

**Atherosclerosis** (ath-uh-roh-skluh-roh-sis), or hardening of the arteries, is a disease in which fatty deposits of cholesterol, cellular waste and other substances, build up along the inner lining of arteries. These sticky, yellowish deposits, also known as **plaque**, restrict the flow of blood through the body. Reduced blood flow leads to a decrease in the body's oxygen supply. Plaque can sometimes rupture causing blood clots, or **thrombus**. When these clots break off and enter the bloodstream, they often lodge in other parts of the body. Sometimes these clots completely block blood flow (**embolus**). When blood flow is blocked to the heart, it causes a heart attack. When blood flow is blocked to the brain, a stroke. Blocked blood flow to the arms or legs can lead to gangrene.

**Cigarette smokers are three times more likely to die from a heart attack than non-smokers.**

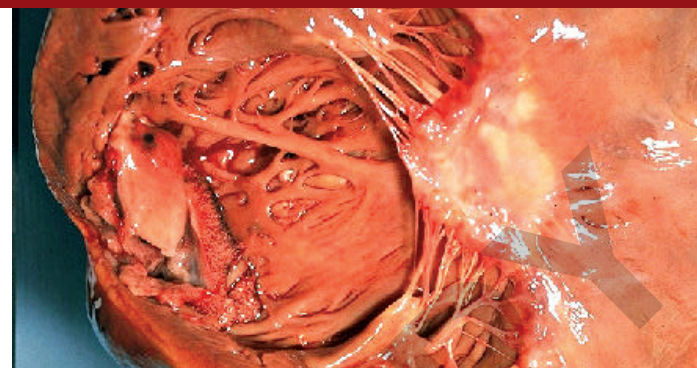
Smoking greatly increases the chance of atherosclerosis and accelerates cardiovascular damage.

- The toxins in cigarette smoke lower good cholesterol (HDL) while at the same time raise bad cholesterol (LDL). The higher the amount of bad cholesterol, the more damage to the arteries and the greater chance of plaque buildup.
- The nicotine and carbon monoxide in tobacco smoke enter the bloodstream and directly damage the linings of arteries (**endothelium**). This damage encourages the buildup of plaque.
- The blood of cigarette smokers has raised levels of fibrinogen and higher platelet counts, making the blood more sticky and directly leading to the buildup of plaque.

## Higher Blood Pressure

Smoking increases carbon monoxide and reduces oxygen in the blood, forcing the heart to pump harder. Combined with the constriction of blood vessels and increased heart rate due to the effects of nicotine, smokers are at risk for **high blood pressure**. Untreated high blood pressure can leave the heart enlarged and weakened, and leads to scarring and hardening of the arteries.

Aorta opened to reveal lesions from atherosclerosis



Blood clot in contact with heart chamber

## Coronary Heart Disease

Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) comes in two forms, **angina** and **heart attacks**. Both diseases are caused by the arteries leading to the heart becoming blocked or narrowed, also called atherosclerosis. Angina is characterized by severe pain in the chest when under exertion, which subsides after resting. Heart attacks occur when a coronary artery is blocked and a part of the heart muscle dies from lack of oxygen.

Cigarette smokers are three times more likely to die from a heart attack than non-smokers. Heavy smokers, a pack a day or more, increase the risk as much as five times. Combine cigarette smoking with high blood pressure and high levels of cholesterol and the chances of having a heart attack are eight times higher. Smoking increases the risk of dying from coronary heart disease by almost four times for middle-aged men and almost five times for middle-aged women.

## Strokes

Strokes happen when clotted material lodges in the brain (Ischemic), cutting off blood supply. Strokes are the fifth leading cause of death in the US, and more than 795,000 people have one each year. Smokers are two and a half times more likely to suffer a stroke than non-smokers. Women who take oral contraceptives and smoke are at an even greater risk of stroke.

## Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD)

80% of patients with PAD, blockage of blood vessels in the extremities are current or former smokers. Those who ignore the symptoms of PAD and continue smoking run the risk of getting gangrene. If one continues to smoke after surgery to correct the PAD, a likely relapse leads to amputation of the limb. Buerger's Disease, a rare form of PAD caused by heavy smoking, consists of inflammation of small blood vessels, which results in the blockage of the arteries. In this disease, gangrene and amputation of multiple limbs is not uncommon.

## Quit or Don't Start

It's never too late to quit smoking. It doesn't matter how old you are or how long you've smoked, the moment you quit your body begins to heal itself. Within one year of having quit, risk of coronary artery disease drops to half that of a smoker. Within 5 to 15 years, your risk of coronary disease and stroke drops to that of non-smokers.

If you aren't addicted to tobacco, stay that way. If you are addicted, quit today. You can do it. Don't give up. Many people who have quit smoking tried several times before they were finally successful. To ensure your success, enlist the support of friends and family. Seek professional help and advice from the resources listed on the back of this pamphlet.

**Live Smart. Live Long.  
Live Tobacco Free.**