

Tobacco and Cardiovascular Disease

Smoking is a major risk factor for heart disease. Smoking and high blood pressure together **triple** your risk for a heart attack. Smokeless tobacco should not be considered a safe alternative to cigarettes. All forms of tobacco use increase the risk factors associated with coronary heart disease.

Get the Facts

- Smoking increases the risk of death from undiagnosed heart disease by 300%.
- Cigarette smokers are 2 – 4 times more likely to develop heart disease than nonsmokers.
- Long-term exposure to secondhand smoke can cause a 30% increase in the occurrence of heart disease in nonsmokers.
- Women who smoke and use oral contraceptives greatly increase their risk of heart disease and stroke.

How does tobacco affect the heart and blood vessels?

- Nicotine, the addictive component in tobacco, speeds up the pulse rate and raises blood pressure making the heart work harder.
- Smoking decreases HDL (good) cholesterol, increases triglyceride levels, and damages the lining in blood vessels.
- Tobacco smoke contains high levels of carbon monoxide depriving the heart and other vital organs of the oxygen it needs.
- Smokeless tobacco is **not** a safe alternative to cigarettes because it increases the risk of high blood pressure leading to heart disease and stroke.



- Exposure to secondhand smoke also has a negative effect on cardiovascular health. Nonsmokers' bodies tend to react more dramatically to tobacco exposure than do smokers' bodies.

Is it worth it to quit?

- Within 24 hours after the last cigarette, blood pressure and pulse rate drop to normal and heart attack risk starts to drop.
- Within a few days or weeks, exercise endurance and heart functioning improve, and HDL (good) cholesterol increases.
- Within a year, the risk for most cardiovascular diseases will be cut in half.

Quitting is tough.

- Many ex-smokers try three or more times to quit before they succeed.
- The small amount of nicotine in patches and gum is not harmful. Ask your doctor to suggest the best quitting aid for you.
- Kentucky's Tobacco Quitline offers **FREE** smoking cessation help through trained coaches to help you quit.