

Smoking and your Heart

Public Information Pamphlets

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Fighting Heart Disease
<http://heartfile.org>

SMOKING AND YOUR HEART

The relationship of smoking to breathing problems and cancer of the Lung is well known but that is not the whole story! Cigarette smoking can cause serious heart and vascular disease and is one of the main controllable risk factors for the development of Angina and Heart attack. Millions of people throughout the world suffer and die from this lethal disease every year and it is very sad because all this could be preventable to a very large extent!

Do you know what we mean by "coronary artery disease", "Angina", "Heart attack" and its "risks?"

The "Coronary Arteries" are blood vessels, which carry blood to the heart. It is very essential for these vessels to be normal because they supply food to the muscles of the heart, which pump blood to the rest of the body. When these arteries are narrowed with fat and other material getting deposited in their lining they are unable to supply enough blood to the heart specially when the heart has to work hard during periods of exercise and excitement. When this happens, chest discomfort called Angina may result. If there is a more severe and prolonged obstruction part of the heart muscle becomes injured or dead. Leading to what is known as a Heart Attack.

Do you know that smoking is a risk factor for the development of Angina and Heart Attack?

Smoking is one of the major risk factors which causes 'Heart Attack'. Others being high Blood Pressure, high blood Cholesterol (fat in the blood) and the presence of Diabetes (sugar). You are also more likely to have a

Heart Attack if you are overweight, exercise less, have undue stress or have a family history of heart disease. Men are more prone to developing heart disease. Age also plays a part; we are all at a greater risk, as we grow older. The more risk factors you have the greater your risk of developing Angina and Heart Attack.

There are certain risk factors that you cannot change or modify. A family history of heart disease as shown by a parent, brother or sister suffering from it at a younger age is one such factor. For this reason the group of other risk factors that ***you can control***, assume an even greater importance. Smoking is the only risk factor, which is entirely preventable. To give it up is even more important if you have any other risk factors.

Do you know how smoking is a risk factor for Angina and Heart Attack?

The poisons in tobacco smoke are Nicotine and Carbon Monoxide.

Nicotine makes the heart beat faster, causes Blood Pressure to rise, damages the inner lining of the blood vessels and increases clotting of blood in them.

Carbon monoxide on the other hand joins the red blood cell pigment called "haemoglobin" and reduces its capacity to carry "oxygen" to the body.

As a result of all these changes, the vessels supplying blood to the heart get more prone to clotting of blood and the deposition of "fat" in them. When occlusion of these vessels occurs, Angina and Heart Attack is the result.

Stopping smoking to prevent Heart Attacks: is it really worth it?

The risk of Heart Attack increases with the amount of cigarettes smoked. In general people who smoke one pack of cigarettes a day have about twice as great a risk of Heart Attack as those who do not, people who smoke two or more packs a day have even a higher risk. This

risk is particularly high in smokers under the age of 50 years. Their Heart Attack death rates are up to ten times greater than those for non-smokers of the same age. The more you smoke and the younger you start, the greater is your risk.

On average, women have less risk of heart disease than men do, but women who smoke, seriously increase their chances of having heart disease.

People who go on smoking after a Heart Attack increase their chances of having a second Heart Attack. The risk of Heart Attack decreases significantly once you stop smoking. After 3 years of quitting cigarettes the risk of death from Heart Attacks is about the same as if you had never smoked.

It is however important to quit smoking before signs of heart disease appear. Don't wait until you have heart disease to quit smoking, act ahead of time and stop smoking now.

What about filter cigarettes?

Filter cigarettes are no better than ordinary cigarettes as the amount of toxic substances that are injurious to the heart still get to the body.

What about "beeri" and "hooka"?

Beeri and Hooka contain tobacco in a very unrefined form and are even more harmful than cigarettes.

What about low tar and low nicotine Cigarettes?

There is no such cigarette as a "safe" cigarette, as has been shown by medical reaserch.

What about cigars and pipe smoking?

People who smoke pipes and cigars have less of a risk from heart disease than people who smoke cigarettes, but more than non-smokers do. Pipe and cigar smoking is however definitely not recommended as an alternative to

cigarette smoking and should be discouraged as much as cigarette smoking.

What about passive smoking and smoke in the environment?

Unfortunately smokers are not the only ones affected by cigarette smoke, but those around them at home and at their work places, who might not be smokers, are also affected negatively by this environmental tobacco smoke. Research studies show that the risk of heart disease is 30% higher amongst people exposed to environmental tobacco smoke at home due to a family member smoking, as compared to those who are not. Non smokers exposed to this second hand smoke who have high Blood Pressure, high levels of Cholesterol in their blood or other risk factors have an even greater chance of developing heart disease. Children receiving this environmental smoke suffer from coughs, colds and chest infections more often than other children, and it is particularly harmful for pregnant women who are likely to give birth to low weight babies.

So if you are a non-smoker but are exposed to smoke in the environment all the more reason that you should discourage smoking. Passive smoking is also harmful for those who already suffer from angina and heart disease and exposure should be avoided as much as possible.

What other diseases can cigarette smoking cause?

Smoking can cause serious diseases of the lungs. Commonly causing chronic cough and phlegm (chronic bronchitis) and also cancer of the lung. Smoking also causes "peripheral vascular disease" (narrowing of the blood vessels supplying blood to the arms and legs) This is particularly dangerous as it causes reduction of blood flow to these areas. Smoking can also increase the

likelihood of stroke. People who stop smoking can reduce the severity of these changes.

Do you know of the ways to give up smoking?

First of all a calm look at all the facts should convince you. Realise that you cannot have smoking and health both at the same time. Think about the money that you will save, and the worry that you will save yourself, your family and your friends.

Take your family and friends into confidence about your intention to quit smoking so that they can give you the necessary support.

Once you have decided to quit, you should set a day, preferably a holiday when you should not be under so much pressure; you should then remove all the cigarettes and ashtrays from your house.

A change in lifestyle involving healthy outdoor activities is not only useful for a healthy existence but also diverts your attention from smoking.

If you think that you are really hooked on nicotine and find it hard not having a cigarette in your hand or mouth, then you may find nicotine replacement useful. This means taking nicotine by a safe method for a number of weeks to reduce cravings for a cigarette, while you become used to not being a smoker. You can then gradually reduce your intake of nicotine and finally cut it out altogether.

There are two methods of doing this: chewing gum and skin patches. The gum releases nicotine when chewed, you can get the lower dose variety of nicotine gum, and it takes a few days to find out how to use it most effectively. The skin patches are like sticking plasters that are usually worn over the upper arm over the day releasing a steady stream of nicotine into the body through the skin. These are available at selected pharmacies in Pakistan. Be sure to read the package insert before starting this treatment.

If you are very addicted, it helps to remember that it is your own effort for your own health that is most worthwhile.

What happens once you quit?

Be on constant guard; beware of special hazards, such as times of stress, pressures at work or deadlines.

If you do have a set back and smoke again, analyse carefully the reasons for your failure, and then try again. Do not give up; keep trying until you succeed.

Smoking is a health hazard; it is not just the single, most important entirely preventable risk factor for the development of Angina and heart attack but also a proven cause of Lung cancer and many other diseases of the lungs and blood vessels. You should not be asked to give it up, you should have done that already!

The guidelines described in this booklet are not intended as a substitute for the advice your doctor may give you based on his knowledge of your particular illness.

Heartfile *Public Information Pamphlets*

No 1 - Prevent a Heart Attack

No 2 - Symptoms of Heart Disease

No 3 - All About High Blood Pressure

No 4 - Smoking and Your Heart

No 5 - Cholesterol and Your Heart

No 6 - Food and Your Heart

Heart disease is one of the biggest killers' world-wide, with a particularly high prevalence in the IndoPak Subcontinent. Heartfile is a non profit organisation fighting heart disease in Pakistan and aims to extend this service to the rest of the developing world. We rely entirely on voluntary contributions to carry out our work and your help in this connection will be greatly appreciated.

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One Park Road, Chak Shahzad, Islamabad, Pakistan:

Tel: ++92 51 224 3580: Fax: ++92 51 2240 773

Web <http://heartfile.org> E-mail: info@heartfile.org

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