The Facts About Smoking and Heart Disease
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This pamphlet has info for patients and their families about the risks of tobacco use, most commonly cigarette smoking, on the development of heart disease.

If you or a family member is a smoker, please use the info in this pamphlet as a starting point to think about quitting or cutting down on smoking.

Talk to your health care provider to ask for more info about smoking and heart disease. Ask about resources and support programs to help you quit smoking. Some resources available to you are listed at the end of this pamphlet.

Smoking facts (from the Heart & Stroke Foundation and Canadian Cancer Society)

• Cigarette smoking is the single most important cause of preventable illness and premature (early) death.

• Risk of heart disease is higher with the number of cigarettes smoked, how long you have been smoking, and if you started smoking at a young age.

• Tobacco smoke has thousands of toxic chemicals including nicotine which contribute (lead) to the development of heart disease by:
  › Higher heart rate and blood pressure
  › Making your heart work harder
  › Higher risk of blood clots
› Lowering good cholesterol and making bad cholesterol worse
› Damaging the lining of arteries and promoting the build-up of plaque (fatty deposits on artery wall)
› Lowering the oxygen in your blood

• The rate of development of heart disease and the risk of dying from it is 60% greater for smokers.
• Continuing to smoke after a heart attack leads to 4 times the risk of a second heart attack and increased risk of death within 4 years.
• Smokers are up to 4 times more likely to have a sudden cardiac death than non-smokers.
• 70,000 Canadians die each year from heart disease and stroke. 11,000 of these deaths, or 30 people a day, are because of smoking.
• 62% of adult smokers intend (plan) to quit in the next 6 months.

**Facts about quitting smoking**
• Quitting smoking is a process, not a single event.
• Nicotine is a powerfully addictive substance that has been compared to heroin and cocaine.
• Nicotine makes changes in the brain and central nervous system that can result in symptoms of withdrawal if smoking is stopped.
• Most people who quit smoking have some withdrawal symptoms.
• Withdrawal symptoms can be controlled with skills and techniques that can be learned. The use of non-smoking aids (such as patches and gum) can really help your chances of quitting.
• Some people can quit completely on their first try, but most people take more than one try.
• A lapse (slip-up) in quitting should not be seen as a failure, but an opportunity to learn for the next try.
• You can quit smoking if you have:
  › The determination to stop or cut down
  › Information about the quitting process and the effects on your health
  › Support from family, friends, and co-workers
  › Time to make the physical, emotional, and social changes needed to quit

Benefits of quitting smoking
• Smokers with heart disease who quit lower their risk of a second heart attack and death by 50% in the first year.
• After 15 years, the risks for heart attack and death are the same as for non-smokers.
• Quitting smoking has an immediate benefit on heart rate, blood pressure, and your heart’s workload.
• Oxygen levels in the blood and HDL (good) cholesterol levels get higher.
• LDL (bad) cholesterol levels are lowered and the rate of plaque build-up is lowered.
Continued effects of not smoking

• Improves circulation and your ability to exercise.
• Lowers symptoms, coughs, and infections.
• Lowers the risk of getting cancer.
• Improves nicotine-induced depression.
• Improves your taste and smell.

Quitting smoking can improve the quality and length of your life and the lives of the people around you.

You can quit and we can help.

Resources to help you quit smoking

Capital Health’s Free Tobacco Intervention Program
› 902-424-2025

Self-help option online:
› www.cdha.nshealth.ca/addictions-program/self-help-assessment

Free Acupuncture Clinics are offered by Addiction Prevention & Treatment Services at several sites around Capital Health for those registered in a support program to quit smoking.
Smokers’ Helpline
› 1-877-513-5333
Trained specialists can answer questions about quitting and help make a plan to stop smoking. Smokers’ Helpline can also give info about support groups anywhere in Canada.
› www.smokershelpline.ca

More information
Heart and Stroke Foundation
› www.heartandstroke.com
Canadian Cancer Society
› www.cancer.ca
Government of Canada–Smoking & Tobacco
› www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/healthy-living-vie-saine/tobacco-tabac/index-eng.php
Health Canada–Tobacco
› www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/tobac-tabac/index-eng.php

If you have any questions, please ask.
We are here to help you.