



Smoking and Its Consequences

Cigarette smoking is a chronic, relapsing addiction that affects many different individuals, both male and female, young and old, and is common across different ethnicities. Over 60 carcinogens are found in cigarette smoke. It is one of the major risk factors for many different health conditions. These include the following:

- **Lung Disease**—Smoking can lead to advanced lung disease called chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). COPD consists of bronchitis and emphysema, which obstruct air exchange in the lungs and affect breathing normally. This can ultimately lead to death due to the chronic nature of the habit. Two of the characteristic symptoms include chronic cough or severe shortness of breath. Respiratory infections, such as pneumonia and asthma, are common. It can also lead to lung or other types of cancer.
- **Heart Disease**—Smoking is a major cause of heart disease. This is a direct result of the damaging effects on the blood and its cells, including white cells, platelets and clotting factors, and the impact on the structure and function of the heart. Individuals are at a two to three times greater risk of dying of heart disease from smoking. Other complications include the risk of heart attack and stroke, which affects the blood vessels supplying blood to the brain. The most common symptoms include chest pain and shortness of breath.
- **Other Effects**—Smoking also affects the muscles and

bones within the body, which could lead to osteoporosis, hip fractures, higher risk of exercise-related injury and low back pain. It can also lead to peptic ulcer or reflux disease, and damaging effects on the skin. Other effects include diabetes, thyroid disorder, depression and sleep abnormalities.

These issues should be addressed by one's physician and other healthcare providers who can provide the necessary testing, guidance and treatment. Smoking cessation is a process that involves an individual thinking about quitting, making the decision to stop, actually quitting and then remaining smoke-free. Individuals may try nicotine replacement therapy to increase their chances of being successful. Replacement products come in patches, gum, lozenges, inhalers and nasal spray. Two approved non-nicotine oral products for smoking cessation include Zyban® and the newest agent, Chantix®. These products should be discussed with the individual's healthcare provider prior to using them.

Smoking cessation programs and support groups are also offered by hospitals, employers and insurance companies to help patients. These programs are designed to help smokers deal with issues and provide support. Individual counseling is also available, as well as behavioral therapy, which allows patients to change their habits during their everyday living, and recognize cues to help modify them. With the current treatments and conjunctive support programs available, patients have more options to help them with smoking cessation and prevent long-term healthcare complications.

For more information, ask your pharmacist!

This information provided by the Michigan Pharmacists Association and:

