

January: Now, Is The Time to Quit Smoking!



January is a time when we think of how we want to do things differently this year for the better. In looking at our health habits, we usually think about losing weight or exercising more. For something different, how about smoking cessation?

"Even a single cigarette poses health risks." states the Surgeon General in a new report on the health effects of smoking (December 9, 2010). The report suggests for the first time that even small amounts of smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke can have health consequences, particularly in people with pre-existing disease.

Smoking's deadly effects are well-known. It's the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S., contributing to an estimated 440,000 premature deaths per year. It's also the leading cause of lung cancer, emphysema, cardiovascular disease, and a host of other illnesses.

Obama administration officials said their report lays out for the first time the damage smoking can do at the cellular and organ level. For example, the report finds inhaling cigarette smoke causes immediate changes in the lining of blood vessels that can make blood clots more likely. That can mean an increased risk of a heart attack, even from secondhand smoke, particularly in people who already have cardiovascular disease.

One-fifth of U.S. adults and adolescents smoke, according to federal data. The White House has announced a goal of reducing that rate to 12% by 2020. One smoker who's trying to quit is the Surgeon General's boss, President Obama. Regina Benjamin (Surgeon General) was asked by a reporter what advice she would give to the president. "I'd give him the same advice I give to any patient, to try their best to quit smoking."

Click on the links below for tips to help you quit smoking.

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