

5 MORE REASONS TO QUIT: *Not Just Lung Cancer*

Most people are aware of the direct link between smoking and lung cancer. But they may not realize that smokers also put themselves at greater risk for chronic pulmonary disease, heart disease and “a laundry list” of other medical complications, says epidemiologist Matthew B. Schabath, Ph.D., a member of Moffitt Cancer Center’s Risk Assessment & Detection Program.

Here is a surprising look at smoking’s effect on a variety of health conditions.

REASON 1: Body Beautiful

Millions of dollars are spent annually on anti-aging products that promise to smooth wrinkles and improve facial skin tone. But one of the biggest culprits in premature aging may be cigarette smoking, according to the American Academy of Dermatology. The nicotine in cigarettes damages blood vessels in the top layers of the skin, reducing blood flow and making it harder for oxygen and other important nutrients to reach the cells. The nearly 4,000 chemicals in tobacco smoke have an effect on skin tone, weakening the collagen and elastin fibers that keep the face smooth and tight.

REASON 2: Infertility

Smoking can be a factor in infertility, says the American Society for Reproductive Health. Some research studies indicate that smoking appears to accelerate the loss of reproductive function and may contribute to early menopause. Many infertility clinics recommend that couples enroll in a smoking cessation program at least two months before considering in vitro fertilization.

REASON 3: Pregnancy Complications

As Moffitt’s brochure “Forever Free™...for Baby and Me” points out, “When a pregnant woman smokes, her unborn baby is also smoking.” Similar to the harmful effect it has on the mother’s body, nicotine causes the blood vessels to constrict in the umbilical cord, decreasing the amount of oxygen the baby receives. That doesn’t even include the dangers posed by the many toxic chemical compounds inhaled during smoking. Smoking can slow the growth of the baby and lead to premature delivery, low birth weight and stillbirth. After the baby is born, second-hand smoke can be just as dangerous, placing the infant at higher risk for behavioral problems, sudden infant death syndrome, breathing problems and lower IQ.

REASON 4: Brittle Bones

Smoking is a risk factor for osteoporosis, a medical condition that causes bones to weaken and become more susceptible to breaking. The earlier a person starts smoking and the more cigarettes smoked each day, the higher the risk for this painful, debilitating disease. The American Academy of Orthopedics also reports that smoking has a negative effect on the production of bone cells and reduces blood supply to the muscles, bones and joints.

REASON 5: Breathing Problems

It can be frightening when a person cannot take a deep breath. That's what happens with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a lung condition with a strong connection to smoking. "Having COPD can create a terrible quality of life, including not sleeping well," says Schabath. Normal lung volume is about five liters. In people with COPD, it is half that. "The lungs are huge, resilient organs, and it usually takes decades to see the harm we've done to them," he says. "By then the damage is permanent and irreversible. Most people with moderate to severe COPD must use a portable oxygen tank because their oxygen supply is so diminished from the disease."

ATTENTION SMOKERS

•*Are you a smoker interested in quitting, but would like some help and information?*

Project Quit is a study being conducted by Moffitt Cancer Center and the University of South Florida. Study participants will receive free informational booklets with helpful quit-smoking advice. Call toll free for more information: 1-877-954-2548.