

Increased risk of lung cancer is not the only reason to quit smoking

The annual [Great American Smokeout](#), promoted by the American Cancer Society (ACS), aims to educate smokers about the benefits of quitting. The ACS hopes that millions of smokers will quit for at least one day, and possibly – ideally - for life. It is well known that smoking causes lung cancer. In 2007, it is expected that 213,000 Americans will be diagnosed with lung cancer. Unfortunately, most of these people will die of their disease – 160,000 deaths due to lung cancer will occur in 2007.

There are a number of other diseases that smoking has been associated with over the years. Many of these also have high mortality rates. If lung cancer alone is not enough reason to quit smoking, maybe some of the other diseases associated with smoking will encourage people to kick the habit.

There are a number of other cancers related to smoking. Cancer of the [head and neck](#) region, particularly cancer of the larynx (voice box) and oral cavity, are strongly associated with smoking. [Esophageal cancer](#) can also be caused by smoking. It has recently been shown that smoking increases the risk of developing acute leukemia. In addition, smoking is frequently the cause of cancers of the [stomach](#), [kidney](#), [bladder](#), and [pancreas](#). Female smokers have an increased risk of developing [cervical cancer](#), probably because smoking decreases the likelihood of the immune system clearing an infection with the [Human Papilloma Virus](#). Furthermore, smoking has been linked to a higher incidence of [breast](#) and [colon](#) cancers.

There are many other diseases besides cancer that are related to smoking. The number one killer in America is heart disease, which has a much higher incidence in smokers. Debilitating lung diseases such as emphysema and chronic bronchitis (or COPD) are almost exclusively seen in smokers. Peripheral vascular disease is also common in heavy smokers. There is also a much higher risk of strokes in smokers.

Male smokers have a higher incidence of impotence due to vascular problems in the pelvic area. They tend to develop potency problems at a much younger age when compared to non-smokers. Unfortunately, impotence from this cause is not as responsive to impotency drugs like Viagra. The longer a man smokes, the higher the risk of this complication.

Female smokers may also have significant problems with arousal and sexual stimulation. Pregnant smokers have a higher incidence of low birth weight babies and increased risk of infant mortality. Female smokers also have more complications (blood clots in particular) related to oral contraceptive use than nonsmokers using birth control pills.

Tobacco smoke is not the only danger. [Smokeless tobacco](#), also known as dip, chew, or snuff, is not a safe substitute for cigarettes. Studies have found use of smokeless tobacco to be highest in high school males (parents - look for it!). It is known to cause oral, throat and laryngeal cancers. In addition, it can do a number on your dental health – so save that pretty smile and put away the dip! It can cause recession of gums, staining of teeth, bone loss around the teeth, bad breath, and leukoplakia (pre-cancerous sores in the mouth). Smokeless tobacco contains nicotine, which is what makes it addictive. This nicotine also enters the blood stream and can cause your heart to beat faster and your blood pressure to rise, leading to chronic heart problems.

It is important that those smokers who have developed cancer quit smoking. Even if some patients are "cured" of their cancers, they are at much higher risk of developing a second malignancy if they continue to use tobacco. It is also much more difficult to tolerate cancer treatments while actively smoking. There is an increased incidence of certain side effects of conventional cancer treatments when they interact with tobacco smoke, like mouth sores, appetite and taste changes, and weight loss.

Even if you are not worried about yourself, you should really consider the health of others. Family, friends, and coworkers are all at risk to develop the above-mentioned diseases from exposure to [second hand smoke](#). Children are also at risk to develop reactive airway diseases, including asthma. Children who already have asthma can be risking serious attacks with exposure to tobacco smoke. Infants are at increased risk of experiencing fluid in the middle ear and other lung disorders including pneumonia, asthma, and bronchitis.

Are you a parent? Every day 1,000 kids under age 18 become regular smokers. In fact, ninety percent of adult smokers started smoking as teenagers. Talk with your kids about the dangers of this addiction. [Tobacco-Free Kids](#) is one of the nation's largest non-governmental initiatives, with the goal of protecting children from tobacco addiction and exposure to secondhand smoke. They offer talking points and support for parents. [Kids Kick Butts Day](#) is a smokeout / smoking prevention day for kids – get your kids involved – it's never too early. Their website has great resources for you and your kids, as well as other kids' stories. Tobacco-Free Kids has a [list of other kid/teen websites](#).

OncoLink strongly encourages its users to participate in the [Great American Smokeout](#). If you are not a smoker, encourage the smokers around you to try and quit for a day – or for life. If you and your partner smoke, make the commitment together for a lifetime of good health. For more information on the Great American Smokeout visit the [American Cancer Society](#).



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