

Breathing Better Living Well

"No Butts About It; Free at Last, Free at Last!"

Why Do We Smoke?

The following is information from the British Lung Foundation
<http://www.lunguk.org>

STOPPING SMOKING

Stopping smoking is likely to be one of the most important things you do in your life. Anyone who has tried to stop smoking will understand how severe this addiction is. Although some people may succeed by going "cold turkey," it is much easier to stop (and not start again) when you can have continued support.

WHY DID I START SMOKING?

Some of these points may ring true with you and many of your smoking friends.

- Experimenting with smoking often starts with friends at school. It's an act of rebellion. Some people think it's cool
- Thirteen percent of 12 year-olds smoke on a regular basis. Once they are hooked they will want their close friends to join them in smoking
- The pressure to be part of the in-crowd is incredibly powerful. And there is evidence that you become addicted more quickly if you start young
- You may have been unlucky in that one or both of your parents smoked. This has a strong influence on people taking up the habit
- You may just have been curious to see what it was like but, as with any drug addiction, you were hooked very quickly
- Unfortunately, when we are young we think that 'it will never happen to me' - even when we're told about the dangers of smoking. Tobacco companies have even, in the past, targeted young children by promoting smoking as exciting and glamorous.
- They know that, if children are hooked when they are young, they are more

likely to smoke for life

Source: British Lung Foundation <http://www.lunguk.org>

Here are some more reasons people smoke:

Cigarettes are a comfort. Smoking cigarettes can somehow seem to help a person both relax *and* feel more energetic. A woman once told me that her cigarettes were her friends. She could always count on them to be there when she felt down and lonely. When she quit smoking she grieved their loss. She felt alone, as if she had lost close friends.

Cigarettes go with coffee. Many people feel that for them, the smoke goes right along with the coffee and having one without the other is impossible. Some people seem to need that "kick" in the morning – something to get them going. When people stop smoking they often, at least for a while, have to stop drinking coffee. One does not taste good any more without the other. There was once a lady in our Pulmonary Rehab program who had suffered tremendous hardship, at age four losing her entire family and her village to war. By the time she was in her 50's she had lived all over the world. She spoke four languages. She told me that she could be at a table with complete strangers anywhere in the world and if they were all drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes, there was an unspoken kinship that made her feel comfortable and at home.

Smoking cigarettes was, especially in the past, looked upon by many as simply "the thing to do." Before the Surgeon General's warning began reaching the general public in the 1960's, most people never thought of cigarette smoking as dangerous. It was a very common and acceptable thing to do. Almost all of my father's friends smoked. My grandfather began smoking at age 11. When I met my husband he smoked three packs a day. Smoking was something, simply, that teenage boys and men did. I once had a patient who told me that his father took him behind the shed at age 12 and said, "It's time you start smoking. You're a man."

Taken from Breathe Better, Live in Wellness: Winning Your Battle Over Shortness of Breath by Jane M. Martin, BA, CRT ©Copyright Jane M. Martin, 2003

WHY DO I CONTINUE TO SMOKE?

An important first step on the road to stopping is accepting that you have a serious **addiction!** The reason you are desperate for the next cigarette is simply because you need your next 'fix' of nicotine.

The cigarette, cigar or pipe is an extremely efficient way of getting the drug into your brain. One deep breath will rapidly pass the nicotine across your lungs through your circulation. It gets directly to your brain in 6 seconds - twice as fast as injecting heroin! This gives you the 'kick' that you have been waiting for and that

you've come to expect on a regular basis.

When the brain doesn't receive this "kick," the **craving** begins. It's relentless and gets worse and worse until the next dose of nicotine. Everyone who is addicted to a drug will tend to persuade themselves that there isn't a problem in spite of all the strong health messages to stop.

You may be convinced that smoking eases stressful situations. But **stress** in your life may be closely linked to your brain's internal stress about when the next dose of nicotine is due.

Some people feel it helps their **concentration**. But once again, the brain finds it difficult to concentrate if it has become increasingly obsessed as to when the next fix is coming.

Women in particular will use the excuse that it will help them to **lose weight**. Smoking does limit your appetite, but it is a myth that it helps to reduce weight. A study of 4000 adolescents over 7 years found that those who smoked or began smoking did not lose weight during this period.

Others who are firmly addicted will have a more **carefree** approach - until they develop a smoking-related disease. Everyone knows someone who smoked 20 a day all their life and lived to be 90. You may think that you will be that person. The odds are very much against that, however.

Source: British Lung Foundation <http://www.lunguk.org>

Here's another take on why people tend not to quit...

Continuing to Smoke: Walking a Tightrope without a Net

So why do people continue to smoke? Why do they keep on doing something that causes such ill health? Why do they put their money and their breath into a little white stick that at one time may have helped them feel glamorous or been their companion in times of terrific stress; but has now betrayed them so dreadfully? There's no doubt about it. Cigarettes have a grip on the person who smokes. Remember, nobody gets out of bed at three in the morning, in the winter, wearing bedroom slippers and their coat over pajamas, to drive to the convenience store to buy cigarettes simply because they love to smoke. That person is hooked.

For the person continuing to smoke, appointments with the pulmonary doctor might be canceled, or the patient might be less than honest with their physician concerning their smoking status. If the appointment is kept the patient knows exactly what he or she is going to hear the doctor say, "You have to quit smoking." This is a difficult thing to hear when the patient feels like he or she absolutely cannot quit.

Social withdrawal may begin. Friends might make negative comments about the person still smoking. "Is Joe still smoking? Just listen to that cough! I quit cold turkey. If a person *really* wants to quit, they can just put their cigarettes down and never pick them up again." This type of reaction is understandable, but if the

patient who smokes feels there is no support in becoming a successful quitter, he or she might experience feelings of depression and failure. "Why quit? The damage is done. Everybody is on my case. Smoking is the only thing I have left." Continuing to smoke is not only dangerous, but can erode what little physical and emotional support remains.

It is also important to mention that while friends and relatives may be sympathetic and empathetic toward loved ones who are afflicted with arthritis, diabetes, or other chronic illnesses, they often tend to feel that the person with emphysema has "done this to himself or herself." Thus chronic lung disease patients are challenged not only by the disease itself, but also by sometimes critical, unsympathetic attitudes of others.

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