Smoking and Lung Disease

Smoking when you have HIV puts you at higher risk for certain infections and AIDS-defining illnesses. These include:

- *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia
- Bacterial pneumonia
- Thrush
- Emphysema. This disease causes the air sacs and blood vessels in the lungs to collapse.
- Oral hairy leukoplakia (white patch that usually develops in the mouth)
- Mycobacterium avium complex (MAC)
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) in women. When female smokers with HIV get HPV, it is often more severe and increases their chances of getting cervical cancer.

All smokers are at risk of getting lung cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure and stroke. However, some anti-HIV prescription drugs raise blood fats, which increase the risk of heart disease and stroke even more.

Effects of Smoking on the Body

- Smoking makes it harder for the body to fight infections
- Smoking makes it harder to live with and treat HIV

Other effects are:

- A faster heart rate and higher blood pressure
- Lungs covered in tar. Even low-tar cigarettes do this. This causes the tiny hairs along the nose and lungs to no longer take out dust, bacteria and other harmful things.
- Poor blood flow. This makes heart attacks and strokes more likely
- Appetite loss. This makes it harder to get important nutrients and vitamins when taking certain anti-HIV prescription drugs.
- Damage from the more than 4,000 chemicals in tobacco smoke. More than 60 are known to cause cancer.
- Bones become brittle
- The liver has to work harder to process medication. This causes illnesses like hepatitis to become worse.
- Side effects from anti-HIV prescription drugs become worse
- The immune system gets weaker. The body can not fight HIV-linked infections as well.
- Raises the risk of chronic lung disease

Chewing tobacco can be as harmful as cigarettes, cigars or pipes. Marijuana also has many of the same effects.

Symptoms

Here are some signs of lung disease to look out for:

- A cough that does not go away and gets worse over time
- Chest pain that does not go away
- Coughing up blood
- Feeling short of breath
- Wheezing
- Losing your voice
- Getting pneumonia and bronchitis often
• Swelling in the neck and face
• Not feeling hungry and/or losing weight without trying
• Feeling tired

**Quitting Smoking**

After smoking for a long time it becomes a habit. Some people say quitting smoking is as hard as giving up street drugs such as heroin. However, quitting is possible.

Quitting brings better health right away, no matter how long you have smoked. The longer you go without smoking, the better your health gets.

During the process of quitting, it is common to experience nicotine withdrawal, which can cause the following: anxiety, anger, irritability, impatience and restlessness, difficulty sleeping and focusing, cravings, stomach pain, nausea, constipation, depression and hunger. However, these go away as the body gets used to not getting nicotine.

There are many ways to quit. If one way is not working well for you, try another. Using several at once sometimes helps. Common ways are:

• Cold turkey. This means never using tobacco again.

• Nicotine gums, lozenges (throat drops), patches or inhalers. They give a little nicotine to control the worst cravings. After some time you stop using them.

• Drugs to relieve withdrawal symptoms. One is Zyban® (bupropion). Some anti-HIV prescription drugs cause the amount of Zyban in the blood to rise.

• Support groups. Being with others trying to quit can keep you on the path.

• Acupuncture or hypnosis

Quitting is a little easier if you:

• Get exercise. This relieves the anxiety and irritability. It also makes it easier to sleep afterward.

• Drink lot of water. This removes nicotine from the body.

• Get plenty of sleep and rest

• Change your habits to avoid triggering cravings

Talking to a doctor or pharmacist can help you find the best way to give up tobacco. Also, make sure to tell your doctor all the medication you are taking.

**For more information:**
Contact your Registered Nurse Care Manager, or call Positive Healthcare’s nurse advice line at: (800) 832-0778.