Smoking and Lung Disease

If you smoke when you have HIV, it puts you at higher risk for an infection or disease that tells a doctor you have AIDS. These include:

- *Pneumocystis carnii* 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 grows 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 cervical cancer.

All smokers are at risk of lung cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure and stroke. Some HIV medications (meds) raise the level of fat in your blood which makes the risk of heart disease and stroke even greater.

Effects of Smoking on the Body

When you smoke it is harder for the body to fight infections. It makes it harder to live with and treat HIV.

Other effects are:

- A faster heart rate.
- A 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, germs and other harmful things.
- Poor blood flow. This makes heart attacks and strokes more likely.
- Loss of hunger. This makes it harder to get the nutrients and vitamins you need when you are on HIV treatment.
- 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 drugs. This can cause an illness like hepatitis to become worse.
- Side effects from anti-HIV 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.

Smokeless 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
- Wheezes
- Losing your voice
- Getting pneumonia and bronchitis often
- Swollen neck and face
- Not hungry or weight loss
- Feeling tired

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How to Quit Smoking

After you smoke for a long time it becomes a habit. Some people say that smoking is as hard to give up as street drugs like heroin.

When you quit you have better health right away, no matter how long you have smoked. The longer you quit, the better your health gets.

When you try to quit, it is common to have nicotine withdrawal. This can make you feel anxious, angry, moody, antsy, depressed and restless. It can be hard to fall asleep or focus. You might crave certain foods or feel very hungry. You may have stomach pain, feel sick to your stomach or it can be hard to use the bathroom. These will go away as the nicotine leaves your body.

There are many ways to quit. If one way does not work well for you, try something else. It can help to use more than one way at a time. Common ways are:

- Cold turkey. This means you do not ever use tobacco again.
- Nicotine gums, throat drops, patches or inhalers. They give a little nicotine to control the worst symptoms. After some time you use less and less of them.
- Meds to help with withdrawal symptoms.
- Support groups. Being with others who want to quit can keep you on the path.
- Acupuncture or hypnosis.

It is a little easier to quit if you:

- Stay active. Exercise makes you feel less anxious and moody. It can help you fall asleep at night.
- Drink lot of water. This gets rid of nicotine from the body.
- Get plenty of sleep and rest.
- Change your habits to avoid places and things that make you want to smoke.

A doctor or pharmacist can help you find the best way to give up tobacco. Also, make sure to tell your doctor all the types of drugs that you take.

If you are ready to quit smoking, we have a program called *Quit for Life*® that can help you stop. Call **1-866-QUIT-4-LIFE** or join online: **www.quitnow.net/ahf** .

For more information
Contact your Registered Nurse Care Manager, or call PHP Nurse Advice Line at: (800) 797-1717.

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