

Circle Of LifeSM: Cancer Education and Wellness for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities



American Cancer Society Circle Of LifeSM
Cancer Education and Wellness for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

**Wellness Along the Cancer Journey:
Healthy Habits and Cancer Screening**

Revised October 2015

Chapter 3: Non-Traditional Tobacco Use



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Non-Traditional Tobacco Use

Group Discussion

- 1) Tobacco kills more people than AIDS, murder, alcohol and drunk driving combined.
 - a) True
 - b) False
- 2) Tobacco contains which of these cancer causing ingredients?
 - a) Ammonia and acetone
 - b) Arsenic and cyanide
 - c) Nicotine and formaldehyde
 - d) All of the above

Tobacco use is bound with tradition among American Indian and Alaska Native peoples. It has been and still is used for ceremonies and as medicine. True ceremonial tobacco is less potent than commercial tobacco, and is used in very different ways. For instance, most ceremonies happen less than once a month and last only a few hours. This allows time for the body to recover from the tobacco. Habitual tobacco use is linked with higher cancer risk in both men and women.

(Native American Cancer Research, (2009). *Get on the Path to Lung Health*. Retrieved September 22, 2009, from <http://www.natamcancer.org/>)

Cigarettes

Habitual smoking causes one in five deaths and millions of illnesses every year in the US. Smoking cigarettes kills more Americans than alcohol, car accidents, murder, suicide, AIDS, and illegal drugs combined. Cigarette smoking accounts for at least 30% of all cancer deaths. It causes a number of cancers: lung, voice box (larynx), mouth (oral cavity), nose, throat (pharynx), bladder, and esophagus - the tube that connects the mouth to the stomach. Smoking is also linked to cancers of the pancreas, cervix, kidney, stomach, sinuses, ovaries, and some types of leukemia.

Smoking is also a cause of heart disease, aneurysms, and stroke. These problems can cause sudden death or long term disabilities. Over time, smoking can make it harder and harder to breathe by causing emphysema and chronic bronchitis. It makes pneumonia and asthma worse. Using commercial tobacco can damage a

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woman's ability to get pregnant and harm babies. Tobacco use by pregnant women is linked with a higher risk of miscarriage, early delivery (premature birth), stillbirth, infant death, and is a cause of low birth-weight in infants.

Smoking can cause or worsen poor blood flow in the body, especially the arms and legs (peripheral vascular disease or PVD). Even worse, surgery that aims to improve the blood flow often doesn't work in people who keep smoking. Surgeons may refuse to do these types of surgery unless the person quits smoking.

Studies looking at men who smoke have found that they are more likely to have impotence (erectile dysfunction). This gets worse the longer they smoke, and may be due to problems with blood flow.

Smoking has been linked to other health problems, too, including gum disease and tooth loss, cataracts, bone thinning, broken hips, and peptic ulcers. Smoking is also linked to macular degeneration – an eye disease that can cause blindness.

Smoking can also harm the people nearby who don't smoke. Adults can get heart disease and lung cancer from breathing another person's smoke. Babies and children who breathe secondhand smoke have more upper respiratory infections (such as colds), ear infections and asthma. It has also been linked to sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

Addictive smoking is a result of the substance called nicotine. Addiction is marked by the repeated, compulsive use of a substance despite its harmful effects. Addiction is defined as mental and emotional dependence. Along with nicotine, cigarettes contain as many as 7000 more chemicals (such as arsenic, formaldehyde, cyanide, ammonia, and acetone). Some of these chemicals may be used to enhance flavor or preserve cigarettes, but others are a direct cause of cancer. Nicotine and the other chemicals found in cigarettes are easily absorbed through the lungs. From there they can spread to the rest of the body.

Cigars

Many people think cigar smoking is more sophisticated and less dangerous than cigarette smoking. Yet one large cigar can contain as much tobacco as an entire pack of cigarettes. The secondhand smoke it gives off, which others breathe in, can fill a room for hours. Smoking cigars, like smoking cigarettes, is linked to

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mouth, throat, lung, pancreatic and bladder cancers as well as other problems like heart disease, emphysema, bronchitis, gum disease, and impotence in men.

Spit Tobacco

Smokeless tobacco products may be called oral, chewing, snuff, spit, and spitless tobacco. All forms of smokeless tobacco contain chemicals known to cause cancer (carcinogens). These products can cause cancer of the mouth, pancreas, and esophagus (the tube that carries food from the mouth to the stomach). Oral and smokeless tobacco also cause many other health problems, such as gum disease, destruction of the bone sockets around the teeth, and tooth loss. Smokeless tobacco causes bad breath and stained teeth, too.

Snuff is finely ground tobacco packaged in cans or pouches. It is sold in two forms: moist and dry. Moist snuff is used by placing a "pinch," "dip," "lipper," or "quid," between the lower lip or cheek and gum. Nicotine and other chemicals are absorbed through the tissues of the mouth. Moist snuff is also sold in small, teabag-like pouches or sachets that can be placed between the cheek and gum. These are designed to be "spit-free" and are promoted as a discreet way to use tobacco. Dry snuff is sold in powder form and is used by sniffing or inhaling the snuff powder up the nose.

Chewing tobacco comes in the form of long strands of loose leaves, plugs, or twists. Portions of this, called "plugs," "wads," or "chew," are chewed or placed between the cheek and gum or teeth. Nicotine and other chemicals are absorbed through the mouth tissues. The user spits out the brown juice – saliva that soaked through the tobacco.

How to Quit Using Cigarettes, Cigars, or Spit Tobacco

There are many reasons to quit using tobacco outside of traditional and ceremonial uses. No matter how old someone is or how long they have smoked, quitting can help them live longer and be healthier. People who stop smoking before age 50 cut their risk of dying in the next 15 years in half compared with those who keep smoking. Ex-smokers enjoy a higher quality of life with fewer illnesses from cold and flu, better sense of health, and less bronchitis and pneumonia. Blood flow and breathing often get better too.

Beyond the health benefits that come with quitting smoking, another reason to quit is so that a person can be there for their family and community. Half of all

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people who use tobacco will die early. Men who smoke commercial tobacco tend to die about 13 years earlier than non-smokers and women who use tobacco die nearly 15 years before non-smokers. These are years that a person's children and family will miss chances to learn from them and share with them.

Here are a few tips for any person who wants to quit smoking:

- Make the decision to quit, and make a list of all the reasons to stop using commercial tobacco. Keep the list on hand and look at it often.
- Set a quit date and choose a plan that works for you.
- List ways to deal with the physical and emotional symptoms that may arise from quitting.
- Stay tobacco-free by using these coping techniques and support from family and friends.

Successful quitting is a matter of commitment to change and a plan that will support the person. The quitter will need to do things differently, and come up with other ways of coping instead of tobacco use. There are a number of resources that can support someone's efforts to quit using commercial tobacco.

Some resources to help people quit using tobacco are listed below. You may want to think about using 2 or more of these:

- Telephone-based counseling links people with trained counselors that can help them create a quit method that will work for them. Call the quit-smoking hotline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW
- Support of family and friends and community support groups like Nicotine Anonymous.
- Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) - there are many products that can help relieve body's withdrawal symptoms. NRT gives a person nicotine in the form of a gum, patch, spray, inhaler, or lozenge, but does not expose them to the other harmful chemicals in tobacco. The NRT can help curb the cravings that are the most common reason for not quitting tobacco.
- There are medicines a health care provider can prescribe for a few weeks to help reduce cravings. They are started a week or so before the quit date.

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- Although not supported by scientific studies, some people use herbs or supplements to help curb cravings or address the withdrawal symptoms of quitting tobacco. Traditional healers may have other ideas to help.

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Activity

Puzzle Your Way to the Facts

Fill in the blanks using the tobacco vocabulary and then complete the crossword puzzle.

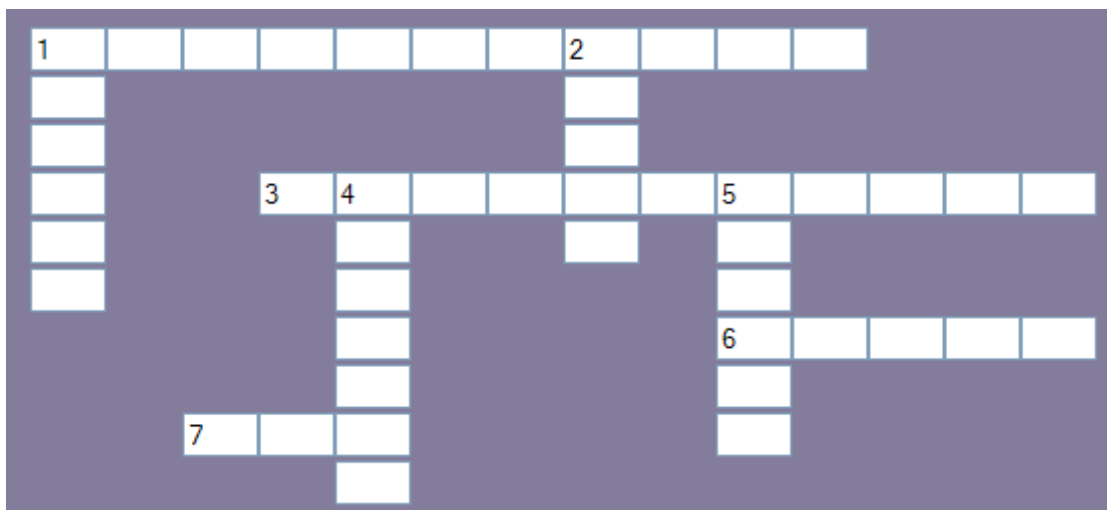
Cancer Respiratory Asthma Exposed Hours Circulatory Die Toxic

DOWN

- 1) There is a link between second-hand smoke and lung _____.
- 2) Second-hand smoke contains some _____ chemicals.
- 4) Even if an expectant mother is only _____ to smoke-filled rooms she will have a baby who is more likely to have health problems.
- 5) There is a link between second-hand smoke and heart disease, _____, middle ear infections, and a range of other diseases.

ACROSS

- 1) Second-hand smoke can have a bad effect on the body's _____ systems.
- 3) Second-hand smoke can also have a bad effect on the body's _____ systems.
- 6) Second-hand smoke can stay in a room for _____, even if a window is open.
- 7) Researchers say about 7,000 non-smoking Americans _____ each year from lung cancer due to second-hand smoke.



(Adapted from a crossword puzzle on the Ministry of Health Services, British Columbia, Tobacco Program site: <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/tobacco/>.)

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Puzzle Your Way to the Facts Answer Key

DOWN

1) There is a link between second-hand smoke and lung _____.

Answer: cancer

2) Second-hand smoke contains some _____ chemicals. **Answer: toxic**

4) Even if an expectant mother is only _____ to smoke-filled rooms she will have a baby who is more likely to have health problems.

Answer: exposed

5) There is a link between second-hand smoke and heart disease, _____, middle ear infections, and a range of other diseases.

Answer: cancer

ACROSS

1) Second-hand smoke can have a bad effect on the body's _____ systems. **Answer: circulatory (blood circulation)**

3) Second-hand smoke can also have a bad effect on the body's _____ systems. **Answer: respiratory (lungs or breathing)**

6) Second-hand smoke can stay in a room for _____, even if a window is open. **Answer: hours**

7) Researchers say about 7,000 American _____ each year from lung cancer due to second-hand smoke. **Answer: die**

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Key Messages

- If a person knows someone uses commercial tobacco regularly, they can encourage them to quit.
- Encourage people in the community not to start using commercial tobacco.
- Talk to children and grandchildren about the dangers of tobacco. The biggest influence in a child's life is their family.
- If someone needs help with quitting tobacco, each state has a tobacco Quitline. Trained counselors can help them make a plan and provide information on ways to quit.
- Encourage local restaurants and businesses to go smoke free and stay smoke free by supporting smoke free laws and policies.
- Take the lead on teaching the community about the dangers of regular tobacco use and the harmful effects that it has on the health of the community.