



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TOBACCO

What is tobacco?

Tobacco is a plant whose leaves contain an addictive central nervous system stimulant (nicotine) that has psychoactive effects. It can be smoked in pipes, cigars and cigarettes; chewed; or inhaled. Tobacco cigarettes are the most addictive and deadly of the forms, not only containing nicotine (a poison used as an insecticide), but also tars (which stick to the lungs and make breathing difficult), carbon monoxide and other toxic chemicals.

What does tobacco look like?

Pure nicotine is an oily, clear to brown liquid. For cigarettes, the dried brown, shredded plant leaves are rolled into a paper. Chewing tobacco is made of dark, moist, compressed plant leaves. "Snuff" tobacco, which is used as in inhalant, is the dry, powdered leaf of the tobacco plant.

What does tobacco do?

Smoking, chewing, or sniffing tobacco causes a chemical reaction in the central nervous system. In seconds, the nicotine passes from the lungs to the bloodstream and then to the brain, increasing the breathing and heart rates, blood pressure, metabolism, and adrenaline production. Tobacco smoke that is breathed in secondhand (passive smoking) can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat of the non-smoker.

Effects of using tobacco include:

1. A drop in skin temperature
2. Increased secretion of saliva
3. Irritation of the lungs and upper respiratory system
4. Reduced urine
5. Temporary loss of appetite

What are the long-term effects of tobacco?

Coronary heart disease, cancer, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, three of the leading causes of death in the United States, are related to tobacco. Smokers increase their chances of developing lung cancer by 220% for men and 120% for women as compared to lifetime non-smokers. To explain just how vital an issue cigarette smoking has become in the United States, the Surgeon General has called it "the most important single cause of preventable death in America."

Tobacco users run the risk of developing esophagus, larynx and mouth cancers. In addition, chewing "smokeless tobacco" can cause growths in the mouth, gum inflammation and disease, and tooth decay.

Effects of long-term tobacco use:

1. Blockage of blood vessels
2. Diminished physical endurance
3. Emphysema
4. Increased blood pressure
5. Lung cancer
6. Respiratory infections
7. Tremors
8. Yellowed teeth and fingers

If you stop smoking...

1. Within 20 minutes, blood pressure and pulse rate drop to normal
2. Within 8 hours, oxygen in the blood increases to normal
3. Within 24 hours, risk of heart attack decreases
4. Within 48 hours nerve endings start to grow
5. Within 1 year, circulation improves, lung function increases by over 30%, overall energy increases, and risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker