

The Effects of Smoking

Smoking can harm almost every organ in your body and smoking over a prolonged period of time can cause a number of serious diseases including heart disease, stroke and lung cancer. It has also been linked to cancers of the mouth, lips, bladder, kidneys, stomach and cervix among others. Smoking during pregnancy can also be extremely harmful to the unborn baby leading to miscarriage, still-birth or premature birth.

The good news is, it is never too late to quit smoking and there are many benefits to be gained no matter what age you are when you give up. By quitting you will reduce your chances of developing smoking related diseases such as those mentioned above, of impotence or having difficulty getting pregnant, and of developing cataracts and brittle bones to name a few. Even people who have already developed smoking-related health problems can benefit from quitting.

Aside from these extremely important health benefits, quitting smoking will save you money that you can spend on other luxuries, your sense of taste and smell will be enhanced, exercise will become easier and you will be setting a great example to children and other smokers.



Tips to Quit

Below is a list of ten tips that can help you stay focused and succeed in quitting smoking for good.

- 1.** Set a date to quit when you will not be under too much pressure and stick to it. Make it sooner rather than later.
- 2.** Let your family and friends know you are going to quit and ask for their support.
- 3.** Throw out all cigarettes, lighters, ashtrays or anything that reminds you of smoking.
- 4.** Try using nicotine patches or nicotine chewing gum if you feel they may help.
- 5.** In the early stages try to avoid situations where you may be tempted to smoke such as parties, drinking or going out for coffee.
- 6.** If you have a craving take deep breaths and distract yourself by doing something else immediately such as talking to someone, doing some exercise or taking a hot shower.
- 7.** Drink lots of water and limit coffee, soft drinks and alcohol as these may increase your urge to smoke.
- 8.** Make changes to your routine that you connect with smoking such as choosing a different route to work or eating breakfast in a different place.
- 9.** Remind yourself every day of the many medical and financial benefits of quitting.
- 10.** Ring the Australian National Tobacco Campaign's Quitline on 131 848 for more advice and assistance to quit smoking.



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In Good Health



Coeliac Disease

Coeliac disease is a medical condition that affects the small intestine (also called the small bowel). It is caused by an abnormal immune response or sensitivity to gluten, a dietary protein found in wheat, rye, barley and oats.

If left untreated, coeliac disease can cause inflammation and damage to the small intestine which can become so severe that essential nutrients cannot be absorbed. Some of the more serious problems associated with untreated coeliac disease include malnutrition, osteoporosis, infertility, depression and an increased risk of certain types of cancer.

SYMPTOMS

The symptoms of coeliac disease can vary widely from person to person and may be undetected. Some symptoms can be confused with irritable bowel syndrome, or other food intolerances. The most common symptoms include:

- Bloating and flatulence
- Weight loss
- Abdominal pain or cramping
- Diarrhoea or constipation
- Fatigue, weakness and lethargy

Children who have coeliac disease may also have slow growth or weight loss, foul-smelling bowel

motions, a swollen abdomen and delayed development.

RISK FACTORS

The exact cause of coeliac disease is unknown however there are both genetic and environmental factors that can play an important role, and people of all ages can be affected. You are more likely to develop the condition if you have a family history of coeliac disease or are Caucasian or West Asian. Sometimes a stressful event such as an injury or surgery can trigger symptoms of coeliac disease.

DIAGNOSIS

If your doctor suspects you might have coeliac disease he or she may carry out coeliac blood tests to test for certain antibodies. If the results are positive a gastroscopy will be needed to confirm the diagnosis. This involves an endoscope being passed down the throat into the small intestine to take small samples (biopsies) of the intestine for testing. It is important not to start a gluten free diet prior to being tested as tests will be



unreliable and may be falsely negative.

TREATMENT

Although there is no cure for coeliac disease it can be treated by sticking to a lifelong gluten-free diet. This involves the avoidance of all gluten-containing foods such as bread, cakes and pasta to allow the bowel lining to recover. There are also a whole range of ingredients and food additives that may contain gluten so it is important to become 'ingredient aware'. A dietician can help you to do this and inform you about gluten-free alternatives such as those made from corn, rice and soy.

For more information about coeliac disease, visit The Coeliac Society at www.coeliacsociety.com.au

Eat to Beat Heart Disease



Proper and balanced nutrition is essential in preventing or reducing the risk of the most common type of heart problem: coronary heart disease. A diet that is high in saturated fat, salt, sugar and high cholesterol foods can lead to a build up of plaque in the arteries (a process called atherosclerosis), which increases the risk of heart attack or stroke. A heart-healthy diet is therefore extremely important as eating the right foods can help not only to prevent heart disease, but even reverse damage that has already occurred.

Below are five diet tips to help you eat to beat heart disease.

- **Limit intake of unhealthy fats** – Limiting the amount of saturated and trans fats you eat is important for a healthy heart. Saturated fats are found in animal foods such as meat and dairy products and many processed foods. Trans fats are found in many cakes, cookies and snack foods. You should limit your intake of these foods and make changes to your diet such as using heart-healthy olive oil or canola oil instead of butter for cooking, drinking low-fat/skim milk instead of whole milk and picking leaner cuts of meat.
- **Eat more fruit and vegetables** – Fruit and vegetables are good sources of vitamins and minerals and are rich in dietary fibre. Eating at least five portions of different fruit and vegetables (fresh or frozen) per day can help lower your cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease.
- **Limit salt intake** – A diet high in salt can increase blood pressure and the risk of a heart attack or stroke. To reduce the amount of salt in your diet you should cut back on canned or processed foods as these often contain high levels of sodium. You should also limit the amount of salt you add during cooking and at the dinner table. Herbs and spices are a good alternative to add flavour to your food.
- **Choose wholegrain foods** – Wholegrain foods are good sources of fibre, vitamins and minerals. Many of the nutrients found in whole grains can help to regulate blood pressure and decrease the risk of heart disease. Wholegrain foods include breads and cereals, oats, wholemeal pasta and brown rice. You should choose these foods instead of refined cereals such as white bread, white pasta, white rice and refined grain breakfast cereals as these do not have the same benefits.
- **Eat more oily fish** – Oily fish such as mackerel, sardines, tuna and salmon contain omega-3-fatty acids which have been shown to lower blood fats called triglycerides and may reduce the risk of sudden cardiac death. You should aim to eat oily fish at least two times a week to receive these benefits.

Ten Reasons to Get Moving

Being active and engaging in regular exercise is the key to a longer, healthier and happier life. Below are ten benefits of being active to motivate you to get moving.

Being active can help you:

1. **Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight** – Combined with a healthy diet, regular exercise can help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight. It also helps to tone and firm your muscles and increase body strength and endurance.
2. **Develop healthier bones, muscles and joints** – Exercise increases bone density, builds muscle strength and keeps your joints flexible. This improves overall movement and reduces the risk of common injuries such as sprained ankles and wrists.
3. **Boost your immune system** – Regular exercise strengthens your immune system so your body is better prepared to fight off minor viral illnesses such as colds and flu.
4. **Reduce health risks** - An active lifestyle can help lower your risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity and cancer.
5. **Strengthen your heart** – Exercise increases your breathing rate and gets your heart pumping faster. This improves heart function, and can help to lower blood pressure and cholesterol.
6. **Boost energy levels** – Regular exercise can increase your energy levels and reduce fatigue. Studies have also shown that regular exercise can help you sleep better at night.
7. **Boost your brain** – The more you exercise, the more efficient your heart gets at pumping blood throughout your body. This means that more oxygen and nutrients are delivered to your brain which can help you to think more clearly, focus better and be more alert.
8. **Boost your mood** – Exercise releases hormones called endorphins which can uplift your mood making you feel more confident, happy and relaxed. Regular exercise can also help you cope better with stress and anxiety, and improve your overall outlook on life.
9. **Live longer** – Numerous studies have indicated that people who participate in regular exercise appear to live longer than those who don't.
10. **Socialise and have fun** – Exercise can be fun and a great way to socialise with friends and family, or meet new people - take a ball to the park with your family, play a game of tennis with a friend, or sign up to join a fitness class or sports club.

Antioxidants

Antioxidants are naturally-occurring compounds in food that can help to protect our body cells from damage caused by free radicals. Free radicals are formed as part of our natural metabolism but also by environmental factors, including smoking, pesticides, pollution and radiation. Although the body can cope with some free radicals and needs them to function properly, overexposure to them has been linked to certain diseases, including heart disease, liver disease and some cancers.

A diet rich in antioxidants may help prevent free radicals from damaging the body. Examples of antioxidants include vitamins (e.g. vitamin C, E, A), minerals such as zinc and selenium, and phytochemicals such as lycopene. Evidence suggests that antioxidant supplements don't work as well as the naturally occurring antioxidants in foods. To increase the antioxidants in your diet, it is therefore best to eat a wide variety of healthy foods each day. Fruit and vegetables are a great source of antioxidants, along with whole grains, lean meats, seafood, nuts, seeds and low-fat dairy products.

LONG Sightedness

Long-sightedness (Hyperopia) is a common condition that affects the ability to see close-up objects. In people who are long-sighted, light rays are focused behind the retina. This can be due to a number of reasons including: the eyeball being too short in length, the cornea not being curved enough, or the lens not being thick enough.

The average person is in fact a little long-sighted and often this is not a problem as the eye compensates by changing the shape of the lens to refocus. However, a more significant amount of long-sightedness can lead to blurred vision which can make focusing for long periods of time more difficult. Other side-effects include experiencing headaches and/or tired eyes.

The condition can develop in childhood and is more likely to develop if there is a history of long-sightedness in the family. It can also develop with age as the lens in your eye becomes stiffer. This is called age-related long-sightedness or presbyopia. Long-sightedness can be easily corrected with glasses, contact lenses or corrective surgery. Laser surgery is an increasingly popular option, but is not suitable for everyone.

If you have difficulties focusing on close-up objects or experience regular headaches and/or tired eyes, you should visit an optometrist to get your eyes tested. It is important to have regular eye tests because as well as diagnosing any vision problems, they can reveal other serious illnesses, such as diabetes or high blood pressure.

SHORT Sightedness

Short-sightedness (Myopia) is a problem with focusing that causes distant objects to appear blurred, while close objects can still be seen clearly. It occurs because in a myopic eye, light rays are focused in front of the retina rather than directly on the retina. The reason for this can be due to the eye being too long from front to back, or the cornea being too steeply curved.

Short-sightedness is a common condition that tends to develop during childhood or the teenage years but can develop at any time from birth. The condition may progressively increase over time but tends to slow down in the mid to late twenties. It can usually be corrected with glasses or contact lenses which can help you to focus more clearly. There are also a number of surgical techniques that can be used to correct the condition. These include laser surgery which involves using a laser to make small alterations to your cornea so that light rays are correctly focused onto your retina.

If you are straining to see things in the distance you should visit an optometrist to get your eyes tested.

