



SMOKING AND CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Cigarette smoking is the most important preventable cause of premature death in the United States. It accounts for more than 440,000 of the more than 2.4 million annual deaths. Cigarette smokers have a higher risk of developing several chronic disorders. These include fatty buildups in arteries, several types of cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (lung problems). Atherosclerosis (buildup of fatty substances in the arteries) is a chief contributor to the high number of deaths from smoking. Many studies detail the evidence that cigarette smoking is a major cause of coronary heart disease, which leads to heart attack.

Smoking increases heart disease risk

Cigarette and tobacco smoke, [high blood cholesterol](#), [high blood pressure](#), physical inactivity, [obesity](#) and [diabetes](#) are the six major independent risk factors for [coronary heart disease](#) that you can modify or control.

Cigarette smoking increases the risk of coronary heart disease by itself. When it acts with other factors, it greatly increases risk. Smoking increases blood pressure, decreases exercise tolerance and increases the tendency for blood to clot. Smoking also increases the risk of recurrent coronary heart disease after bypass surgery.

Cigarette smoking is the most important risk factor for young men and women. It produces a greater relative risk in persons under age 50 than in those over 50.

Women who smoke and use oral contraceptives greatly increase their risk of coronary heart disease and stroke compared with nonsmoking women who use oral contraceptives.

Smoking decreases [HDL \(good\) cholesterol](#). Cigarette smoking combined with a family history of heart disease also seems to greatly increase the risk

Resource and tools to quit smoking

The health benefits start almost immediately, and within a few years of quitting your risk of stroke and coronary artery disease are similar to non-smokers. We can help with resources and tools for the healthiest decision you will make – [quitting smoking](#).