

# Start With the Facts: Tobacco

*I'm 50 years old and I'm tired of being treated like an outcast, my clothes and hair stink, my fingers are stained yellow and I don't have enough air in my lungs to climb two flights of stairs. Worse yet, while my friends are enjoying conversation and being together, I'm looking for some corner to sneak a cigarette. Even my grandson doesn't like being around me when I smoke. Enough already! Help! I need to stop smoking!*



**Does this sound familiar? Rita has tried everything: cold turkey; nicotine gum and patches; guilt trips but nothing works, not even being in the hospital for smoke-related illnesses. Little did she know that when she lit up that first cigarette at sixteen, her addictive personality would keep her smoking for the next 34 years!**

**There is good news however. By joining a support group at her job and learning the facts and tips for changing habits, Rita has been able to cut down from two packs of cigarettes a day to a little less than one. Her mentor in the support group is a big help giving her tips to use every day. And her family and friends provide support too. If you're having a problem with smoking, read on to get the facts and then get help to quit smoking.**

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of premature death in the United States. In other words, people are dying when they don't have to. Worldwide, there are almost 10,000 deaths A DAY from tobacco-related illnesses. In the U.S. alone 400,000 people die each year from illnesses aggravated by tobacco: heart disease, cancer, chronic pulmonary disease and stroke. Not all of these smokers are adults. Recent studies show a downward trend in the number of young people that smoke. That's great news! But, there are about 3,000 or more new smokers under age 19 that start smoking each day not to mention the 15.5 million kids exposed to second hand smoke each day.

What is Tobacco?:

- Tobacco is a plant that comes in two varieties, *nicotiana tabacum* and *nicotiana rustica*. *Nicotiana rustica* is used the most and provides the source of all the tobacco produced in the U.S.
- Leaves from the tobacco plant are dried and shredded and then rolled into cigarettes or cigars, or packaged as pipe or chewing tobacco or as snuff. It is the only organic source of nicotine – the addicting chemical.
- Cigarette smoke contains over 3,000 chemicals including: Acetone (nail polish remover), Hydrogen cyanide (rat poison) Nicotine (cockroach killer), Hydrazine (rocket fuel) and Formaldehyde (embalming fluid). These are not just words used to scare you (though you should be scared) but chemicals that are found in cigarettes after scientific testing.

## How Is Tobacco Taken:

<p>Most smokers use cigarettes. The nicotine-heavy smoke is inhaled into the lungs where it produces a pleasurable sensation not unlike a high.</p> <p>Side effects of use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Stress</li> <li>❑ Rapid heart beat</li> <li>❑ Increased blood pressure</li> <li>❑ Decrease in oxygen flow to body tissue</li> </ul>	<p>.Some people smoke tobacco in cigars and pipes. Most do not inhale because the nicotine is strong enough to be absorbed through the mouth.</p> <p>Side effects of use can result in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Cancers of the mouth, throat, larynx, esophagus and stomach</li> </ul>	<p>Tobacco Use has been implicated in many illnesses. A few are:</p> <p>Fatal heart failure, stroke, heart attacks, cardiovascular disease. Various cancers of the stomach, pancreas, uterus, cervix, kidney, bladder and some forms of leukemia. Sinusitis, bronchitis, pneumonia, emphysema and reproductive complications such as miscarriage, premature birth, birth defects and especially low-birth weight babies.</p>
--	---	--

## Perhaps the most tragic part of smoking is **PASSIVE SMOKING** – especially when it involves children.

Passive smoking is the process that causes non-smokers to inhale smoke involuntarily. Some of the smoke they inhale is known as “sidestream smoke” – the smoke that smolders off the end of a cigarette, cigar or pipe. In some adults, sidestream smoke can cause respiratory distress and allergic reactions as well as lung cancer. Other tests implicate passive smoking as causing more severe episodes of asthma and respiratory illnesses among children .



What Can You Do?

***Remember, second hand smoke causes up to 300,000 lung infections (such as pneumonia and bronchitis) in infants and young children each year.***

***Respect the non-smoker (especially children) by not exposing them to second hand smoke.***

**Smokers:** Quit while you can. The longer you smoke, the harder it is to quit. Don’t try and do it alone. Join a group like [Nicotine Anonymous](#) or [Quitnet](#). Most health insurance companies now have support systems to help smokers quit. While you’re quitting, don’t smoke around kids. Bad enough we pollute ourselves, help kids keep their lungs healthy. Respect the rights of non-smokers. Keep a smoke-free household around kids.

**Non Smokers:** Avoid smoke filled rooms whenever possible. Help educate your smoking friends to Tobacco’s dangers and give them support in quitting.

**Kids:** If you don’t smoke – don’t start. Join the thousands of kids that are choosing healthy life styles instead of addiction.

**Phoenix House American Council for Drug Education**

**164 West 74<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10023, 1-800-488DRUG (3484) [www.acde.org](http://www.acde.org)**