

Nutrition and Smoking

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I recently gave a corporate lecture about nutrition and smoking. Although very few people in the western world are ignorant to the fact that smoking is a health hazard, I plan to pass this article along to my patients who smoke, to remind them exactly how bad and dangerous their habit is.

Cigarettes are one of the most lethal carcinogens known to man. They are the single most common and preventable cause of cancer in society. Although most people know that cigarette smoking causes lung cancer and other respiratory illness, and some people know it is one of the main causes of heart disease, most people do not grasp the nature and extent of how harmful tobacco is.

Cancer-tobacco causes and increases the risk of the following:

1. lung cancer
2. throat cancer
3. tongue cancer
4. esophageal cancer
5. bladder cancer
6. pancreatic cancer
7. stomach cancer
8. liver cancer
9. kidney cancer
10. colon cancer
11. rectal cancer
12. cancer of the cervix

Other diseases tobacco causes or increases the risk of include:

1. heart disease
2. stroke
3. hypertension
4. aneurysm
5. chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
6. emphysema
7. bronchitis
8. pneumonia
9. myelocytic leukemia
10. osteoporosis
11. impotence
12. collagen damage (premature wrinkling)
13. lowers HDL (good cholesterol)
14. periodontal disease
15. gastric ulcers
16. peripheral vascular disease
17. pelvic inflammatory disease
18. premature menopause
19. macular degeneration

20. angina pectoris
21. benign prostatic hypertrophy
22. duodenal ulcer
23. psoriasis
24. Crohn's disease

Passive smoking, also known as environmental tobacco smoke in the U.S., causes the following morbidity and mortality each year:

1. deaths from heart disease: 35,000 to 64,000
2. deaths from lung cancer: 3,000
3. sudden infant death syndrome: 1,900 to 2,700
4. exacerbation of childhood asthma: 400,000 to 1,000,000 cases
5. bronchitis and pneumonia: 150,000 to 300,000 cases
6. new cases of asthma: 8,000 to 26,000
7. low birth weight babies: 9,700 to 18,600

Nutrition

In this "information age," it is surprising that smokers aren't more concerned about their health. Smokers consume more sugar, alcohol, and caffeine than nonsmokers. Smokers do not eat as many fruits and vegetables as nonsmokers. Smokers do not exercise as much as nonsmokers.

Beta carotene studies from Finland were the first that demonstrated that high levels of beta carotene alone increased the chances of lung cancer in persons who had been heavy smokers for over 30 years. Within the studies, smokers in the placebo group who ate the most fruits and vegetables in their diet had the lowest rates of cancer.

Smokers who refuse to quit, but want to minimize their risk of illness, should consume a minimum of 10 servings of fruits and vegetables daily and reduce the amount of stressor foods: refined carbohydrates; alcohol; caffeine; saturated fat; and processed foods. They should also take nutritional supplements: vitamin E (400 to 800 IU per day); vitamin C (5-15 mg per pound of body weight daily); and beta carotene (no more than 10,000 IU per day). Other antioxidants worth considering include: grape skin; seed or pine bark extract; lipoic acid; coenzyme Q10; green tea extract; and inositol six phosphate.

Smokers who are serious about reducing their risk of disease should also engage in regular exercise daily. Of course, quitting smoking would help much more than any food or supplement.

References

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