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SMOKING CESSATION

Smoking tobacco is the leading cause of preventative illness (emphysema, chronic bronchitis, coronary heart disease, osteoporosis, stroke, and dementia) and causes over 438,000 deaths each year in the United States. It is as addicting as narcotics or alcohol but does not make you dysfunctional. Many smokers have a craving for a cigarette in stressful situations but with help and motivation anyone is able to quit.

To quit smoking:

1) Prepare to quit. The first step to quitting is a true desire to quit smoking, without this desire, everything will fail. Establish a quit date, which can help you prepare emotionally. Prepare by not buying extra cartons of tobacco and eliminating ashtrays in your home and workplace. Pick a date that is meaningful to you – birth date, special anniversary, holiday, even a New Year's resolution.

2) Get help from others. Inform family and friends that you are going to quit and that you will need their emotional support.

3) Get help from your physician and voluntary agencies. The public health service has a quit smoking consumer guide available from your health department or on the web (www.cdc.gov/tobacco). The American Lung Association, the American Heart Association, and the American Cancer Society all have helpful programs. Nicotine Anonymous has a free phone line, (800) 642-0666. The Cancer Institute has a smoking quit line, (877) 44U-QUIT.

4) Quit with a friend. People who quit smoking together are more often successful. They can support each other when they feel the need for another cigarette.

5) Get pharmaceutical help. Nicotine, the addictive ingredient in cigarettes, is a drug. You can help yourself by supplying nicotine in another fashion. Nicotine is available as gum, a patch, nasal spray, or an inhaler, while you withdraw from your habits. Nicotine patches are now available generically over-the-counter.

Non-nicotine containing medications Bupropion (Zyban®) and varenicline (Chantix®) are prescription drugs. These medications can more than double your chance of quitting. There is no evidence to support the efficacy of other methods, such as hypnosis or acupuncture.

6) Help yourself. The desire to smoke is both habit and addiction. When do you have a cigarette in your hand? Try putting something else in your hand. Change your routines where you find that smoking is your pleasure, find something else enjoyable to do every day. If you feel smoking helps you with your bad moods, you should try talking with a friend or your doctor.

7) If you fail do not despair. On average most permanent non-smokers will quit 8 times before finally quitting for good. If you are using alcohol realize that being around other smokers can make you want to smoke. You may gain weight if you change your desires from tobacco to food. Usually weight gain is less than 10 pounds but by staying active and eating a healthy diet you can avoid the weight gain.

If you relapse, reevaluate! What did or did not work? Should you withdraw slowly or does "cold turkey" work better?

***Lastly Remember:** Quitting smoking can improve your health and the health of those around you.