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Live a Tobacco-Free Life

Canada's #1 Preventable Killer

It might surprise you to learn that smoking is the #1 cause of preventable disease and death in Canada. It is the only substance sold legally in Canada that will kill one out of two of lifetime users.



The Good & The Bad

The Good – British Columbia, specifically the North Shore, has some of the lowest smoking rates in Canada! In Canada, nine out of ten high school students are smoke free.

The Bad – Everyday young people on the North Shore will try smoking for the first time, and one out of three of them will become addicted to this deadly product.

Nicotine is as Addictive as Heroin & Cocaine



It is very unlikely that someone tries smoking and thinks that he/she will become a lifelong smoker. In fact only 5% of young people who smoke believe that they will continue to smoke past high school, but unfortunately 3 out of 4 of them will continue smoking into adulthood. That is because nicotine is highly addictive, and some studies have found it to be as addictive as heroin and cocaine. You may hear people say “smoking is just psychological, people can quit whenever they want”, but what many people do not understand is that nicotine addiction is actually “physiological” too – meaning the brain actually changes when it is exposed to nicotine. Certain genetic make-ups determine how addicted someone will become to nicotine, but duration of exposure plays a role too. Therefore, the earlier and more you smoke - the more addicted you will likely become.

“The cigarette is the best designed drug delivery system ever invented.”
– Dr. Andrew Pipe
Mixed Messages?

The messages on tobacco that youth receive these days can be very conflicted. When you were in elementary school you probably knew dozens of reasons why you would never smoke, but unfortunately that message may become diluted as you age. **Why?** The tobacco industry invests a lot of money into trying to convince you to smoke; one study found out that the amount is approximately \$200/second on advertising! In Canada, the Government is very restrictive on tobacco advertising, so the tobacco advertising that you are exposed to here is often subtle or subliminal. You will not see any ads in magazines, on billboards, or in convenient stores in British Columbia but if you watch films & music videos and attend concerts you will likely be exposed to many actors, musicians, and DJs still promoting tobacco. In reality, the largest consumer of tobacco products is the mentally ill population, but it is rare that you will see that portrayed in the media.



What about Hookahs? “Shisha isn’t burned, it’s heated”.

Hookah use is not safer than cigarettes. Water pipes do not filter the smoke – they cool and moisturize it which causes less irritation and the added flavours and sugar mask the tobacco taste. Carbon monoxide measured in smokers’ blood after using a hookah has been found to be 3.75 times higher than the carbon monoxide from a cigarette.



What about cigars or cigarillos? “You don’t inhale them.”

Some cigars have as much tobacco in 1 cigar as in a whole pack of cigarettes! The risks of tobacco smoke exposure are similar for all sources of tobacco smoke. Cigars can be addictive, just like cigarettes.



Burning ANYTHING releases toxic byproducts including: carbon monoxide, “tar”, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (causes cancer) and other compounds including formaldehyde and acetone (also cause cancer).

Already hooked?

The great news is that it is never too late to stop smoking. From the moment you stop your health will begin to improve. In chemistry class you may have learned about a chemical called carbon monoxide, and many of you will have carbon monoxide detectors in your house. Carbon monoxide is a chemical that attaches to your red blood cells when you smoke that reduces the oxygen your blood can carry. Luckily, after 8 hours of not smoking, the level of carbon monoxide in your blood from smoking will drop – meaning your oxygen levels will go back up to normal. Within 48 hours of stopping, your sense of taste and smell will start to improve. Within 72 hours of stopping, your breathing will get easier and within 2 weeks to 3 months your circulation will improve and exercising becomes easier. **Need more help?** Check out the website www.quitusersunite.com, www.quitnow.ca or speak to your school nurse, your pharmacist, or your family physician.

