

## Frequently asked questions about stopping smoking

### Can smoking affect my medication?

“Smoking cigarettes is ‘the primary cause of drug interactions’. That is, the effects of any medication taken by a patient may be changed or rendered ineffective by smoking.”

### Does it make any difference if I smoke while taking birth control pills?

“Yes. Women who use birth control pills have twice the risk of having a heart attack as non pill users, but women who use the pill and smoke have ten times the risk of a heart attack.”<sup>1</sup>

### Is cigarette smoking truly addictive?

“Yes, cigarette smoking can become an addiction in the same way as the use of alcohol, tranquilizers, and other drugs. The essential features of addiction include: compulsive use of a substance (i.e., use that is no longer under the voluntary control of the user), tolerance (a need to increase the dose to achieve the same effect and feel normal), and often physical dependence, as shown by withdrawal symptoms when use of the substance is stopped. Many cigarette smokers show all of these features.”<sup>1</sup>

### How important is smoking to the health of Canadians?

“Smoking is the most important cause of preventable illness, disability and premature death in Canada. Each year, at least 40,000 deaths are caused by smoking — more than 20% of all deaths among Canadians.”

### Doesn't it take years of smoking to cause any damage?

“No. Just one cigarette speeds up your heartbeat, increases your blood pressure and upsets the flow of blood and air in your lungs.”

### Why is it so hard to quit?

“Because cigarettes contain nicotine. And, nicotine, through only one of many, many things in cigarette smoke, is also an addictive or dependence — causing drug that affects the brain and nervous system. Part of the dependence on cigarettes is psychological. In their minds, smokers link cigarette smoking with pleasure — coffee after dinner, getting together with friends, talking on the phone or just relaxing.”

### How many smokers would like to quit?

“Surveys show that over 85% of cigarette smokers would like to stop. Almost 75% of Canadian smokers reported having tried to quit at least once.” “Over half of all Canadians who have smoked have quit.”<sup>2</sup>

#### References:

- 1 Canadian Cancer Society. (1996). Fifty most often asked questions about smoking and health...and the Answers. Booklet.
- 2 Ontario Tobacco Research Unit. (1995). The Health Effects of Tobacco Use. Prepared for the National Clearinghouse on Tobacco & Health.
- 3 The Lung Association. (1990). Q&A on smoking and health. Pamphlet.
- 4 The Lung Association. Nicotine Addiction and Cigarettes. Pamphlet.