



## WHY QUIT SMOKING NOW?

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## No Matter How Long You've Smoked, Quitting Can Help Improve Your Health

No matter how old you are or how long you've smoked, quitting can help you live longer and be healthier. People who stop smoking before age 50 cut their risk of dying in the next 15 years in half compared with those who keep smoking. Ex-smokers enjoy a higher quality of life. They have fewer illnesses such as colds and flu, lower rates of bronchitis and pneumonia, and feel healthier than people who still smoke.

- Quitting smoking lowers the risk of lung cancer, other cancers, heart attack, stroke and chronic lung disease.
- The health benefits of quitting smoking are far greater than any risks from any small weight gain (which is usually less than 10 pounds).

— Source: American Cancer Society

According to the U.S. Surgeon General:

- Quitting smoking has major and immediate health benefits for men and women of all ages. These benefits apply to people who already have smoking-related diseases and those who don't.



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## Cold-Weather Safety

### Hypothermia

Hypothermia occurs when the body loses more heat than it produces. Symptoms include change in mental status, uncontrollable shivering, cool abdomen and a low core-body temperature. Severe hypothermia may cause rigid muscles, dark and puffy skin, irregular heartbeat and respiration, and unconsciousness.

Treat hypothermia by protecting the victim from further heat loss and seeking immediate medical attention. Get the victim out of the cold. Add insulation such as blankets, pillows, towels or newspapers beneath and around the victim. Be sure to cover the victim's head. Replace wet clothing with dry clothing. Handle the victim gently because rough handling can cause cardiac arrest. Keep the victim in a horizontal position.

Of course, the best way to avoid frostbite and hypothermia is to stay out of the cold. Be patient and wait out the dangerous cold weather.

— Source: National Safety Council

## Menopause and Perimenopause

### What's the Difference?

Perimenopause means “around menopause” and refers to the time period during which a woman's body makes its natural transition toward permanent infertility (menopause). Perimenopause is also called the menopausal transition.

Women start perimenopause at different ages. You may notice signs of progression toward menopause, such as menstrual irregularity, sometime in your 40s. But some women notice changes as early as their mid-30s.

The level of your estrogen — the main female hormone — rises and falls unevenly during perimenopause. Your menstrual cycles may lengthen or shorten, and you may begin having menstrual cycles in which your ovaries don't release an egg (ovulate). You may also experience menopause-like symptoms, such as hot flashes, sleep problems and vaginal dryness. Talk with your doctor about any symptoms you have as both natural remedies and medications, if needed, can be helpful.

Once you've gone through 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period, you've officially reached menopause, and the perimenopause period is over.

— Source: Mayo Clinic



## Aging and Exercise

### Older Seniors Can Benefit, Too

More than two thirds of older adults don't engage in regular physical activity, according to the National Institute on Aging. Most people know that exercise is good for them, but older adults have often been left out of the picture — until recently. Today research shows that people of different physical conditions have much to gain from exercise and from staying physically active. They also have much to lose if they become inactive.

Exercise isn't just for older adults in the younger age range who live independently. Researchers have found that exercise and physical activity also can improve the health of people who are

90 or older, who are frail, or who have diseases that often seem to accompany aging.

Staying physically active and exercising regularly can help prevent or delay some diseases and disabilities as people grow older. In some cases, it can also improve health for older people who already have diseases and disabilities if it's done on a long-term, regular basis.

— Source: National Institutes of Health

## SENIOR HEALTH UPDATE

### Heart Disease

Knowing your risk for heart disease, along with what you can do to protect your heart, is an important part of taking care of your health. Take these questions along to your next doctor's appointment and get the facts.

1. What is my risk for heart disease?
2. What is my blood pressure? What does it mean for me and what do I need to do about it?
3. What are my cholesterol numbers? (These include total cholesterol, LDL, HDL and triglycerides — a type of fat found in the blood and food.) What do they mean for me and what do I need to do about them?
4. What are my body mass index (BMI) and waist measurement? Do I need to lose weight for my health?
5. What is my blood-sugar level, and does it mean that I'm at risk for diabetes? If so, what do I need to do about it?
6. What other screening tests do I need to help protect my heart?
7. What can you do to help me quit smoking?
8. How much physical activity do I need to help protect my heart?
9. What's a heart-healthy eating plan for me?
10. How can I tell if I'm having a heart attack? If I think I'm having one, what should I do?



— Source: National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute; National Institutes of Health

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Is That Weight-Loss Plan Too Good to Be True?

If it seems too good to be true, it probably is! In choosing a weight-loss program, watch out for these false claims:

- Lose weight without diet or exercise!
- Lose weight while eating all of your favorite foods!
- Lose 30 pounds in 30 days!
- Lose weight in specific problem areas of your body!

Other warning signs include very small print, asterisks and footnotes, and before-and-after photos that seem too good to be true.

Your best bet? Ask your doctor to recommend a safe, healthy, effective weight-loss plan.

— Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



### Preventing Infections When You're Hospitalized *Don't Be Afraid to Speak Up*

Doctors and nurses care for many sick people in a day, and they risk spreading germs to you if they don't wash their hands. Hand hygiene is the simplest, most effective way to reduce the chance of catching these infections. But healthcare workers are often busy and may forget.

Simply asking your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professional to wash their hands before touching you can go a long way toward preventing infection.

Your relatives and friends should also wash their hands before and after visiting you in the hospital. Either soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub are fine.

These suggestions can also apply to a clinic or doctor's office, of course. Don't be shy about speaking up and protecting your health. Thanking those who use good hand hygiene is a great way to keep these interactions positive and to encourage the continuation of the practice in the hospital or doctor's office.

— Source: World Health Organization





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## SUPPLEMENT MEGADOSING

### Debunking the "More Is Better" Myth

People often mistakenly assume that because supplements are sold over the counter, they are completely safe to take, even in high doses. For example, even though no studies have proven that large doses of vitamin C can prevent or cure colds, many people still think this is true. You may hear claims about other benefits of taking large doses of certain vitamins. But using large doses of vitamins to fight disease in humans is not supported by scientific evidence so far.

In fact, large doses of some vitamins or minerals have been shown to be dangerous. For example, too much vitamin C can interfere with the body's ability to absorb copper, a

metal that's needed by the body. Too much phosphorous can inhibit the body's absorption of calcium. The body cannot get rid of large doses of vitamins A, D, E and K, and these can reach toxic levels when too much is taken.

Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about all the supplements you take, along with all the medications you take, to ensure that you are not at risk for dangerous interactions and to make sure you are taking the correct dose.

— Source: American Cancer Society

### Bad Breath? Here's Help

If you suffer from bad breath, first try to determine whether your oral-hygiene habits and/or your diet are the culprits. Good oral hygiene is the first step to caring for your mouth and warding off bad breath. Brush your teeth at least twice a day and floss daily. Remember to brush your tongue, because odor-causing bacteria can cling to the surface.

It may be tempting so try to solve your bad breath with a quick fix, such as mouthwash, gum or mints, but these merely cover up the problem and don't offer a lasting fix. Consult your dentist if the problem persists. He or she will want to rule out any oral disease or other medical condition before recommending specific products, medications or treatments.

— Source: Massachusetts Dental Society

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