

**Splurge** - Volume 5 Issue 6 (June 2010)

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## **SMOKING**

California did it, New York did it. And now we're following suit: the smoking ban. I know a lot of people on both sides of this debate, but I'm happy about the discussion of smoking cessation. Smoking cessation is a hard topic for many people, even those who really want to quit. For decades now, the facts have been proven that cigarettes are toxic and will wreck your health. Cigarettes are also highly addictive, and most people need help quitting. It's generally known that smoking puts a person at greater risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, heart attack, lung cancer, breast cancer, emphysema, and more. Dentists can weigh in on this too – smokers' mouths see more disease and discoloration than non-smokers.

We know so much about the carcinogenic effects of nicotine and smoking. So what are the benefits of quitting smoking? Some patients think, "well, I've been smoking so long, why quit now?" There are a lot of reasons, actually – no matter how long you've smoked, no matter what your age, today can always be the first day you quit the smokes, and get on the road to better health.

One benefit people experience is easier breathing, expanded lung capacity. This helps exercise feel even better, endurance in everyday tasks better, less fatigue, and improve your sex life. You can slow or improve cardiovascular disease and hardening of the arteries. In my field, I see people all the time who've smoked almost their entire lives, and after they've quit, their skin improves, they smile more often, and breathe deeply again.

Getting there is another issue, however. Most people try to quit at least three times before they quit altogether. Cigarettes are addictive, and a stimulant. Generally speaking, people rely on cigarettes for a lift from a bad mood or a stabilizer of a good mood, and that's one reason it is so very difficult to quit for good. Some people stay away from cigarettes for years, and then when a stressful event happens, they grab a pack of cigarettes and are back to the races.

There are excellent tools now to help you quit. Speak to your physician and see what plan you can come up with, find a friend to quit with, or a support group to help quit. As with any habit you quit, it's crucial to establish other behaviors that feel good, and can be a new stress/mood manager. Lots of people think that if you quit smoking you'll gain weight (a rationalization I've heard for many years). This can be easily averted by establishing healthy habits in place of cigarettes instead of food. Yoga and meditation are great for this, as well, because they incorporate mindfulness and stress reduction.

One practical reason in this economy is also financial. Not only health issues that increase risk for catastrophic illness and chronic illness, but cigarettes themselves are expensive, and always a target for tax increases.

Take that money you spend on cigarettes, and splurge on something you love every week. Incorporate self-care as part of your daily routine, and reward yourself with something healthy. Don't give up – I know it's difficult to quit, but your physician, loved ones, and your community support you in quitting smoking, and taking your health to heart. You're worth it.

Listen to Dr. Galichia's Radio Show – "Take Your Health to Heart" every Saturday from 11 AM to Noon on 1480 KQAM in Wichita. If you have any medically related questions, please call us during the LIVE broadcast at 1-800-TALK-997 or 1-800-825-5997. You can also e-mail your questions anytime to

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