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Smoking

You can *blow smoke*, *go up in smoke*, and there's *smoke and mirrors*. You can *smoke like a chimney* and *die for a smoke*, both literally and figuratively. And don't forget that *where there's smoke there's fire*. Of course here we're talking about *smoking*, an intransitive verb meaning to inhale and exhale the smoke of tobacco.

Do people still smoke? You bet they do! According to the America Lung Association, almost 6,000 people under 18 years of age start smoking every day—more than 2 million young people every year.

It wasn't too long ago that anyone could buy cigarettes and smoke anywhere they wanted to—even in hospitals. There were advertisements for cigarettes every which way you turned. Now a-days, smoking is banned in almost all public places, and cigarette companies aren't allowed to advertise except for in a few magazines.

Why? Because tobacco contains chemicals, like nicotine and cyanide, that are poisonous. These days most everyone knows that the poison chemicals in tobacco cause cancer, emphysema, and heart disease. They know that every cigarette you smoke shortens your life by 5 to 20 minutes. And they know that buying cigarettes costs thousands of dollars a year, enough money to buy a car.

And if that's not bad enough, nicotine is also highly addictive. Your body and mind get used to the nicotine and you need it just to feel normal. Being addicted means you can't stop smoking cigarettes. And you can't stop buying the very cigarettes that will shorten your life with each one you smoke. Where's the sense in that?

All the bad consequences of smoking probably seem far off in the future, but they're not. In addition to the long-term problems caused by those poison chemicals, there are also problems you'll have right away. Here are just a few of them:

1. Bad skin. Smoking restricts blood vessels preventing oxygen and nutrients from getting to your skin—which is why smokers look pale and unhealthy.
2. Bad teeth and breath. Cigarettes make your teeth yellow and give you halitosis, otherwise called bad breath.
3. Smelly clothes and hair. The smell of cigarette smoke stinks up your clothes, hair, and everything it touches.
4. Impaired performance. People who smoke can't compete because of rapid heartbeat, decreased circulation, and shortness of breath.
5. More sickness. Smokers get more colds, flu, bronchitis, and pneumonia than nonsmokers. And if you have asthma, it will make it worse.

If you don't smoke, you'll run faster, jump higher, swim faster, be in better health, have more money in your pocket, and live longer. That sounds like a good deal.

Smoking Dos and Don'ts

- If you smoke, quit.
- Don't substitute filtered or low-tar cigarettes for regular cigarettes. They are not better for you.
- If you don't smoke, don't start.

CONSIDER THIS: Chewing tobacco is just as bad for your body as smoking.

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