WHAT'S IN CIGARETTE SMOKE?

Tobacco smoke is a complex mixture of more than 4,000 chemicals in the form of gases, particles or both. When you inhale cigarette smoke, dozens of harmful substances enter your lungs and spread through your body. They include:

- **NICOTINE** —an addictive drug and a toxin that narrows your veins and arteries. Nicotine raises your blood pressure and damages your heart by forcing it to pump faster and work harder.

- **CARBON MONOXIDE—**a gas that robs your heart of the oxygen it needs as fuel to pump blood around your body. Over time, your airways swell up and let less air into your lungs.

- **TAR—**clogs your lungs and contains many dangerous chemicals that can either cause cancer or act with other chemicals to stimulate cancer growth

- **PHENOLS**– hazardous chemicals that paralyze and eventually kill hair-like cells that normally sweep clean the sensitive lining of your airways.

- **FINE PARTICLES**—can irritate your throat and lungs, cause "smoker's cough", make you produce more mucus and damage lung tissue

HOW ELSE CAN SMOKING HARM YOUR HEALTH

CANCER—smoking is widely recognized as causing lung cancer, but it also increases the risk of cancer of the lips, tongue, mouth, nose, esophagus, pharynx, larynx, pancreas, bladder, cervix, vulva, penis and anus. Other cancers (of stomach, kidney, liver and blood) have also been linked to smoking.

DIABETES– smoking worsens some of the health complications caused by type 1 or insulin – dependent diabetes. Smoking raises the blood sugar level, making it harder to control the high blood sugar levels caused by diabetes.

BLOOD CIRCULATION—because your blood carries less oxygen and more plaque, you are more likely to suffer dangerous blood clots and strokes, back pain and blockages of the tiny blood vessels in the eyes, ears and other organs. This can lead to poor circulation in your hands, feet and limbs which can cause severe pain, esp. when exercising and can result in gangrene and amputation.

INFECTIONS—bacteria and viruses can more easily enter and take hold in your body because smoking damages the lining of your throat and lungs and weakens your immune system.

BREATHING PROBLEMS—in the long term, you are more likely to have some degree of emphysema, a disease that causes progressive shortness of breath, as smoking cuts the amount of oxygen able to be carried from the air into your blood. As smoker you will be more prone to asthma attacks because smoking narrows your airways.

AEGING—you will look prematurely aged as wrinkles appear around your eyes and mouth sooner and deeper than in non-smokers. A woman who smokes tends to reach menopause one or two years earlier than a non-smoker or an ex-smoker because smoking reduces the amount of estrogen in her body.

She is also more likely to develop osteoporosis—the weakening of the bones that accompanies ageing.

HEARING—you may lose your hearing earlier than a non-smoker and are more susceptible to hearing loss due to ear infections and loud noise. This is due to decreased blood flow to the inner ear resulting from plaque build up on the blood vessel walls.

TOP TIPS FOR QUITTING

It is important to your health to quit smoking. Here are some points to help you make that decision.

- **DECIDE WHY YOU WANT TO GIVE UP—YOUR REASONS MIGHT BE TO:** Reduce your risk of heart attack; Feel fitter and not feel breathless; Rid your body of nicotine and other chemicals; Have more money from not buying cigarettes; Be a good example for your family.

- **HOW SHOULD I GIVE UP?** Understand why you smoke—the feelings, habits and addiction; Plan ways to deal with quitting; Set a date to quit not too far away; Ask friends and family to support you

- **CHOOSE A WAY THAT WILL WORK FOR YOU—**Stopping suddenly and completely is often successful; Reducing the number of cigarettes smoked each day over two weeks.

- **CONFRONT YOUR CRAVINGS—**Delay on the urge to smoke; Breathe deeply; Sip water slowly; Do something else

HEALTH BENEFITS AFTER YOU'VE QUIT

- **20 MINUTES—**Blood pressure and pulse return to normal
- **8 HOURS**—Nicotine and carbon monoxide levels in the blood are halved , oxygen levels in the blood return to normal
- **24 HOURS**– Carbon monoxide is eliminated from the body and the lungs start to clear out the build up of tar
- **48 HOURS**– There is no nicotine left in the body. Taste and smell are greatly improved
- **72 HOURS**—Breathing becomes easier, bronchial tubes begin to relax, energy levels increase
- **2—12 WEEKS—**Circulation improves, making walking and running a lot easier
- **3—9 MONTHS**—Cough, wheezing and breathing problems improve as the lungs have room for up to 10 % more oxygen
- **1 YEAR**—risk of heart attack is halved
- **10 YEARS**—risk of lung cancer is halved
- **15 YEARS—**risk of heart attack is at same level as non-smokers.

REMEMBER

Take one day at a time; if alcohol and caffeine trigger your desire to smoke, avoid them at least in the short term; refuse if you are offered a cigarette; you're getting healthier and fitter every-day; reward yourself.

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QUIT SMOKING!