

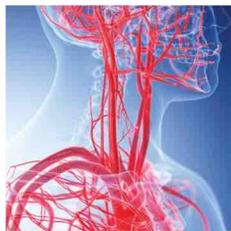
# SMOKING AND VASCULAR DISEASE

YOUR VASCULAR HEALTH

**Don't SMOKE.** You hear that from every medical professional you meet. You hear it causes cancer, heart attacks and stroke. Can one product really cause that much damage? Yes!

The reality of cigarettes is that it is not one product. Every time you smoke, you not only ingest nicotine, but hundreds of other deadly chemicals in the tobacco leaf, paper, contaminants and fertilizers used to grow tobacco. Over time the accumulation of these products causes serious harm to multiple organs. And unlike many things in life, moderation in smoking is not a cure.

Benzene, for example, is a substance on the Environmental Protection Agency's list of national hazards. It is abundant in tobacco smoke and takes more than 32 hours to completely clear the human body. That means that even ONE cigarette a day continues to keep this poison in your system.



## What Does SMOKING Do to Your Arteries?

Smoking is the number one preventable cause of death in the United States. Its effect on heart attacks, peripheral vascular disease and strokes is due to the damage that smoking does to the arteries.

The two chemicals in cigarettes that cause the most trouble are nicotine and carbon monoxide. Nicotine, besides being addictive, has very powerful effects on arteries throughout the body. Nicotine is a stimulant, speeding up the heart by about 20 beats per minute with every cigarette. It raises blood pressure and is a vasoconstrictor, which means it makes arteries all over the body become smaller. That makes it harder for the heart to pump blood through the constricted arteries and it causes the body to release its stores of fat and cholesterol into the blood.

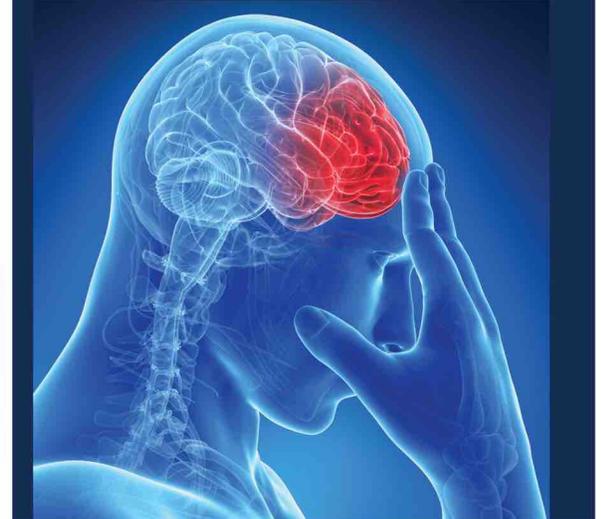
Smoking accelerates the hardening and narrowing process in your arteries; it starts earlier and blood clots are two to four times more likely. Smoking lowers your levels of high-density lipoprotein cholesterol ("good" cholesterol) and raises your levels of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol ("bad" cholesterol). It decreases the movement of cholesterol through the body, and contributes to its accumulation in your arteries. This puts you at a higher risk for heart attack, stroke, and limb loss.

Cigarette smoking increases risks of blood clots significantly. If the blood clots in an artery and blood can no longer get through, the tissue that is supposed to be supplied with blood has lost the source of its oxygen and nutrients and dies in minutes. This can result in heart attacks, strokes, and gangrene of the leg.



## SMOKING Effects on the Brain

Smoking increases the risk of stroke by narrowing the arteries in the brain and the carotid arteries in the neck that lead to the brain. In addition, the vessels to the brain can become blocked by a clog or blood clot, which can lead to collapse, stroke and paralysis. If the blood vessels are completely blocked to part of the brain, that part will die. Patients may lose the ability to speak, walk or move normally, or, depending on the part of the brain affected, the stroke may be fatal.



# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND VASCULAR HEALTH

YOUR VASCULAR HEALTH

## TWICE-WEEKLY MUSCLE-STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES include:



- Sit-ups, push-ups
- Weight lifting
- Heavy gardening such as digging and shoveling
- Yoga

The lack of regular physical activity results in 250,000 deaths annually, according to a 2003 report in the medical journal, *Circulation*. Persons who are the least physically fit have a mortality risk 4.5 times higher than physically fit persons.

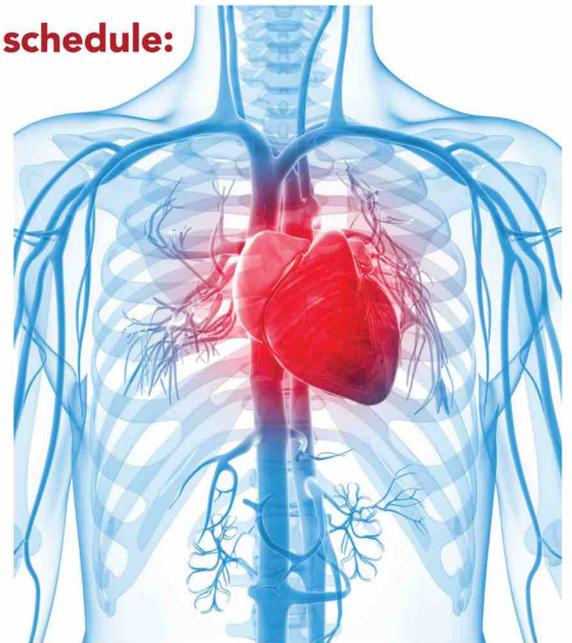
## To add PHYSICAL ACTIVITY into your daily schedule:

- Select enjoyable activities
- Work out with a friend
- Encourage family members to participate
- Measure progress through a daily exercise journal.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Physical activity is not just good for your veins and arteries – just about every part of your body can benefit. According to the CDC, exercise also helps:

- Maintain healthy weight
- Reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease; can lower blood pressure and improve cholesterol levels
- Reduce the risk for type 2 diabetes; can help control glucose levels
- Reduce the risk of colon and breast cancer
- Strengthen bones and muscles - can increase or build muscle mass and strength; can slow the loss of bone density that comes with age; can help with arthritis and other joint conditions
- Keep thinking, learning, and judgment skills sharp
- Reduce the symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Improve the ability to complete daily activities and prevent falls for older adults
- Increase the chances of living longer by reducing the risk of dying from heart disease and some cancers.



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