



## Smoking and Nutrition

Smoking is detrimental to your health; it can lead to the development of many preventable diseases and other health problems. Though many people are aware of the major negative health effects of smoking, few may know how smoking affects the body from a nutritional standpoint including diet, exercise, and nutritional deficiency.

### **How might smoking affect personal health choices?**

Studies show that, beyond the act of smoking itself, smokers may engage in other negative health behaviors. Smokers are more likely than nonsmokers to practice the following:

- Eating too few fruits and vegetables
- Eating foods with a high fat content
- Consuming alcohol and caffeine
- Not getting sufficient sleep
- Being physically inactive (not getting enough exercise)
- Avoiding regular health care provider visits

Unhealthy physical activity and nutrition behaviors are associated with smoking. Smoking not only increases the risk for serious health problems like cancer and cardiovascular disease, but it can also start to create unhealthy patterns in your daily routine: another barrier to a healthier you.

### **How does smoking affect nutrient intake?**

Smoking has a negative impact on the way our bodies use vitamins and nutrients on a daily basis. Nicotine and the toxic substances in cigarettes not only drain the body of vitamins and minerals, but they also block absorption of these vital nutrients. Consider these facts:

- Smoking just one cigarette robs the body of 25mg of vitamin C (the amount of vitamin C in an orange). Vitamin C is an important disease-prevention antioxidant.
- Smoking accelerates the production of free radicals (the body's version of "exhaust fumes"); excess production can cause tissue and organ damage. The body fights back with antioxidants like vitamin C but, because vitamin C levels are lower in smokers, the body may be unable to fight these free radicals.
- Smoking affects the absorption of vitamin D, which aids in and improves the absorption of calcium. This contributes to smokers' higher risk of osteoporosis.

### **If I smoke, are there any changes I can make to improve my health?**

Smokers may benefit from dietary and behavioral improvements. Incorporate more fruits and vegetables into your diet and begin a regular exercise routine; you might consider vitamin supplements as well. These steps are important, but the best and only way to fully protect your body from the damage caused by smoking is to quit!