



American Heart Association®

Hard Hats with Heart™



Toolbox Talks

How Smoking and Nicotine Damages Your Body

You probably know that smoking can lead to lung cancer, but did you know smoking is also linked to heart disease, stroke and other chronic diseases? Smoking can increase your risk for cancer of the bladder, throat, mouth, kidneys, cervix and pancreas. Thinking about quitting? Look at the facts!

Why should you quit?

- Smoking is the most preventable cause of death in the United States.
- Almost one third of deaths from coronary heart disease are due to smoking and secondhand smoke.
- Smoking is linked to about 90% of lung cancer cases in the United States.
- Smoking rates overall are down, but too many adults still smoke, vape and use other forms of tobacco, especially between the ages of 21 and 34.
- On average, smokers die more than 10 years earlier than nonsmokers.
- You can be one of the millions of people who successfully quit every year.

What makes cigarettes so toxic and dangerous?

There are more than 5,000 chemical components found in cigarette smoke and hundreds of them are harmful to human health, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Some examples are:

- **1,3-Butadiene** is a chemical used to manufacture rubber. It is considered to be a carcinogenic chemical that can cause certain blood cancers.
- **Arsenic** is used to preserve wood. Some arsenic compounds have been linked to cancer of the lung, skin, liver, and bladder.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Do you inhale carbon monoxide when smoking?

Yes, and once in your lungs, it's transferred to your bloodstream. Carbon monoxide decreases the amount of oxygen that is carried in the red blood cells. It also increases the amount of cholesterol that is deposited into the inner lining of the arteries which leads to heart disease, artery disease and possibly heart attack.

Discussion Questions:

- Have you seen an increase in smoking/vaping in the people you surround yourself with?
- Why do you think there is an increase in smoking/vaping? Stress? Accessibility?