The dangers of cigarettes and other tobacco products have had health professionals sending up smoke signals for years. Although smoking rates have declined, nearly 18 percent of people 18 and older in the U.S. still currently smoke, and nearly half a million Americans die every year from smoking-related disease. In fact, smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S.
Did you know?

- Cigarettes contain more than 7,000 chemicals. At least 69 are known to cause cancer.
- On average, cigarette smokers die 10 years earlier than nonsmokers.
- Smoking is directly responsible for 90 percent of lung cancer deaths.
- For every person who dies from smoking, at least 30 (more than 16 million Americans) are living with a smoking-related illness.
- Secondhand smoke causes ear infections, asthma attacks, and respiratory symptoms and infections in children and raises their risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). In adults, secondhand smoke causes heart disease, lung cancer and stroke. In fact, living with a smoker increases nonsmokers’ chance of developing lung cancer by 20 to 30 percent by exposing them to many of the toxic chemicals released from burning tobacco products and exhaled smoke.
- Smoking raises blood pressure and stresses the heart, increasing your risk for heart disease.
- Health experts are concerned that electronic cigarettes are “a gateway to nicotine addiction and, ultimately, smoking, particularly for young people.” Electronic cigarettes pose a risk to unborn babies whose mothers smoke (or vape) and increase nonsmokers’ exposure to nicotine and other toxins, according to a report by the World Health Organization.
- More people are addicted to the nicotine in cigarettes than to any other drug. Nicotine may be as addictive as heroin, cocaine or alcohol.

Stopping smoking is the single most important step you can take to improve the length and quality of your life. It’s never too late to quit! In fact, you cut your risk for heart disease in half just one year after quitting. Even quitting at age 50 reduces your risk of dying from a smoking-related disease by 50 percent, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Although many people quit on their own, it generally takes multiple tries. You’re more likely to be successful if you get a little help. So send up your own smoke signal: Declare your intention to quit and tap into one of these proven quit-smoking resources.

- Call the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) 1-800-QUIT-NOW hotline (800-784-8669) or visit the CDC’s Quit Smoking Resources or I’m Ready to Quit resources page
- Join the American Lung Association’s Freedom from Smoking program
- Talk to your doctor about smoking cessation medications and local quit-smoking programs

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