



## What you need to know about...

### Social Smoking

Most Americans are non-smokers. In the Chicago area, 80% of adults don't smoke at all. However, there is a small group of people who see themselves as occasional, casual, or social smokers.

Most people who smoke every once in a while don't know the facts about social smoking. They don't realize that every cigarette is doing damage to the body. They may not be aware of how easy it is to become addicted to nicotine. They may think that since they're not *real* smokers, they can quit whenever they want.

#### Addiction

Let's face it. *Nobody* wants to become addicted when they start smoking. No one is looking forward to dropping \$7 a pack for an unhealthy habit. Everyone wants to be a casual smoker who's able to take it or leave it.

But the fact is nicotine really doesn't care how you *define* your smoking. The addiction rate for nicotine—the percentage of casual users who become addicted users—is higher than the addiction rate for heroin or cocaine!

Think of it another way: Smoking 10 cigarettes on one evening out equals 100 "hits" of nicotine and 100 pairings between going out and smoking. Repeat that every Friday and Saturday for a month, and you've got 800 hits and 800 pairings.

Pretty soon, your brain starts to connect the drug with what you're doing. So, the next time you try to drink, play pool, or eat hot wings *without* cigarettes, your brain isn't too happy that the pattern has been changed. It gets harder and harder to do one activity without the other.

#### Becoming a Social Non-Smoker

It doesn't take a doctor to realize that the same toxins that make your clothes, hair, and skin smell like a bar are also affecting your heart, lungs, and blood vessels. You send your jacket to the dry cleaner. How about your lungs?

Even smoking a few cigarettes can stress your heart, increase your blood pressure, and damage the insides of your blood vessels making it easier for blood clots to happen. Plus, if you're smoking when you're out, you're also getting hit with your friends' secondhand smoke.

#### Want to Quit?

- Tell your friends that you're trying to quit.
- Order a different drink when you go out, try to switch up the routine.
- Find something else to do when you're bored or anxious.
- Talk to your doctor about options to help you quit.
- Join a cessation support group.
- Call the RHAMC for more information.