



Smoking and Nutrition

Smoking is detrimental to your health; it can lead to the development of many preventable diseases such as lung cancer, asthma, emphysema and heart disease. 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 vitamin deficiency.

How might smoking affect personal health choices?

Studies show that people who smoke are more likely than people who don't smoke 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

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 other 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. However, because vitamin C levels are lower in people who smoke, 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 higher rates of osteoporosis in people who smoke.

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

Incorporate more fruits and vegetables into your diet and begin a regular exercise routine; consider taking 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!



