

## **New Surgeon General's Report Expands List of Diseases Caused by Smoking**

U.S. Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona today released a new comprehensive report on smoking and health, revealing for the first time that smoking causes diseases in nearly every organ of the body. This newest report finds that cigarette smoking is conclusively linked to diseases such as leukemia, cataracts, pneumonia and cancers of the cervix, kidney, pancreas and stomach.

"We've known for decades that smoking is bad for your health, but this report shows that it's even worse than we knew," Dr. Carmona said. "The toxins from cigarette smoke go everywhere the blood flows. I'm hoping this new information will help motivate people to quit smoking and convince young people not to start in the first place."

According to the report, smoking kills an estimated 440,000 Americans each year. On average, men who smoke cut their lives short by 13.2 years, and female smokers lose 14.5 years. The economic toll exceeds \$157 billion each year in the United States -- \$75 billion in direct medical costs and \$82 billion in lost productivity.

In 1964, the Surgeon General's report announced medical research showing that smoking was a definite cause of cancers of the lung and larynx (voice box) in men and chronic bronchitis in both men and women. Later reports concluded that smoking causes a number of other diseases such as cancers of the bladder, esophagus, mouth and throat; cardiovascular diseases; and reproductive effects. Today's new report expands the list of illness and conditions linked to smoking. The new illnesses and diseases are cataracts, pneumonia, acute myeloid leukemia, abdominal aortic aneurysm, stomach cancer, pancreatic cancer, cervical cancer, kidney cancer and periodontitis.

Statistics indicate that more than 12 million Americans have died from smoking since the 1964 report of the surgeon general, and another 25 million Americans alive today will most likely die of a smoking-related illness.

The report concludes that smoking reduces the overall health of smokers, contributing to such conditions as hip fractures, complications from diabetes, increased wound infections following surgery, and a wide range of reproductive complications. For every premature death caused each year by smoking, there are at least 20 smokers living with a serious smoking-related illness.

Another major conclusion, consistent with recent findings of other scientific studies, is that smoking so-called low-tar or low-nicotine cigarettes does not offer a health benefit over smoking regular or "full-flavor" cigarettes.

"There is no safe cigarette, whether it is called 'light,' ultra-light,' or any other name," Dr. Carmona said. "The science is clear: the only way to avoid the health hazards of smoking is to quit completely or to never start smoking."

The report concludes that quitting smoking has immediate and long-term benefits, reducing risks for diseases caused by smoking and improving health in general. "Within minutes and hours after smokers inhale that last cigarette, their bodies begin a series of changes that continue for years,"

Dr. Carmona said. "Among these health improvements are a drop in heart rate, improved circulation, and reduced risk of heart attack, lung cancer and stroke. By quitting smoking today a smoker can assure a healthier tomorrow."

Dr. Carmona said it is never too late to stop smoking. Quitting smoking at age 65 or older reduces by nearly 50 percent a person's risk of dying of a smoking-related disease.