



QUITLINE IOWA

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Smoking Among Older Adults

Older smokers are at greater risks from smoking because they have smoked longer (an average of 40 years), tend to be heavier smokers, and are more likely to suffer from smoking-related illnesses. It is never too late to call Quitline Iowa give quitting a chance!

- Today's generation of older Americans had smoking rates among the highest of any U.S. generation. In the mid-1960s, about 54 percent of adult males and another 21 percent were former smokers; about 24 percent of adult males were smokers and another 25 percent were former smokers, in 2005.
- In 2005, 18.7 million Americans over the age of 45 smoked, accounting for over 41 percent of all adult smokers. Nine percent of Americans over 65 years of age currently smoked.
- An estimated 438,000 Americans die each year from diseases caused by smoking. Smoking is responsible for 90 percent of deaths from lung cancer, 21 percent of deaths from heart disease, 18 percent of deaths from stroke, and 80 to 90 percent of deaths from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (emphysema and chronic bronchitis) - all leading causes of death in those over 50 years of age.
- Men 65 or older who smoke are twice as likely to die from a stroke, and women smokers are about one and a half times as likely to die from a stroke than their nonsmoking counterparts. The risk of dying

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from a heart attack is 60 percent higher for smokers than nonsmokers 65 or older.

- Cigarette smokers are more than twice as likely as nonsmokers to develop dementia of any kind including Alzheimer's disease. Smokers also have two to three times the risk of developing cataracts, the leading cause of blindness and visual loss.
- Smoking reduces one's normal life expectancy by an average of 13 to 15 years - thereby eliminating retirement years for most smokers.
- Quitting smoking has proven health benefits, even at a late age. When an older person quits smoking, circulation improves immediately, and the lungs begin to repair damage. In one year, the added risk of heart disease is cut almost in half, and risk of stroke, lung disease, and cancer diminish. Among smokers who quit at age 65, men gained 1.4 to 2.0 years of life and women gained 2.7 to 3.4 years.
- A recent study found among middle-aged smokers and former smokers, with mild or moderate chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, both breathed easier after quitting.

Modified from: *Smoking Among Older Adults Fact Sheet*. June 2007. American Lung Association.
<http://www.lungusa.org>

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