Cigarette Smoking and Its Health Risks

General Information:

**Why do I need to know about the health risks of cigarette smoking?** Cigarette smoking is the most preventable cause of illness and death. Cigarettes are filled with nicotine, which acts like a poison in your body.

**What are the health risks of cigarette smoking?** You may have breathing problems that make it difficult for you to do daily activities or play sports. You have a higher risk of bone fractures because smoking can cause osteoporosis (brittle bones). If you fall asleep with a lit cigarette, you can start a fire. Cigarette smoking can also cause the following health problems:

- **Cancer:** Smoking increases your risk of many kinds of cancer. The most common cancers are lung, lip, mouth, or throat cancer.

- **Heart and blood vessel disease:** The nicotine in tobacco causes an increase in your heart rate and blood pressure. Nicotine also causes your blood vessels to narrow. This can lead to blood clots in your heart or brain and cause a heart attack or stroke. Cigarette smoke has carbon monoxide in it. This can decrease the amount of oxygen flowing to your heart and other organs.

- **Lung disease:** The chemicals in cigarette smoke can damage your lungs. This causes a buildup of dirt and waste products in your lungs. Many people who smoke have a long-term cough as a result. Cigarette smoking may also cause long-term lung infections or diseases, such as asthma, emphysema, or chronic bronchitis. You are also at higher risk for respiratory illnesses, such as colds or pneumonia.

- **Gastrointestinal disease:** Cigarette smoking increases the amount of acid in your stomach. This can cause an ulcer or gastric reflux.

- **Women and smoking:** You have a higher risk of heart and blood vessel disease if you smoke and take birth control pills. The risk is more serious if you are 35 years or older. You may have a harder time getting pregnant if you smoke. If you are pregnant and smoke, you have a higher risk of miscarriage or having a stillborn baby. Babies born to mothers who smoke often weigh less and are at higher risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

**Why should I quit smoking?** Your health will improve and your risks for many diseases will decrease. Your breath, clothes, and hair will no longer smell like smoke. Tobacco will no longer stain your teeth. Tobacco smoke is dangerous to others. If you quit, you will decrease the risks to those around you, such as your children or family members.

**Where can I go for support and more information?** There are many ways to quit smoking. Some may work better for you than others. Your caregiver can help you find the best plan to quit.

- **Smokefree.gov**
  Phone: 1.800.784.8669
  Web Address: www.smokefree.gov

- **American Lung Association**
  1301 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
  Washington, DC 20004
  Phone: 1.202.785.3355
  Phone: 1.800.548.8252
  Web Address: www.lung.org

**Care Agreement:**
You have the right to help plan your care. Learn about your health condition and how it may be treated. Discuss treatment options with your caregivers to decide what care you want to receive. You always have the right to refuse treatment.

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