



## Healthy Lifestyle

# Quit smoking

## Is cigar smoking safer than cigarette smoking?

Answers from J. Taylor Hays, M.D.

No. Despite what you might have heard, cigar smoking isn't safer than cigarette smoking — even if you don't intentionally inhale the smoke.

Like cigarette smoking, cigar smoking exposes you to:

- **Nicotine.** Cigars, like cigarettes, contain nicotine, the substance that can lead to tobacco dependence. A single full-size cigar can contain nearly as much nicotine as does a pack of cigarettes. If you inhale cigar smoke, you can get as much nicotine as if you smoked cigarettes. And even if you don't intentionally inhale, large amounts of nicotine can be absorbed through the lining of your mouth. Smoking cigars instead of cigarettes doesn't reduce your risk of nicotine dependence.
- **Secondhand smoke.** Secondhand smoke from cigars contains the same toxic chemicals that secondhand cigarette smoke does. This type of smoke can cause or contribute to lung cancer and heart disease. It also increases the risk and severity of childhood asthma, ear infections, and upper and lower respiratory infections in children.

Cigar smoking poses serious health risks, including:

- **Cancer.** All tobacco smoke contains chemicals that can cause cancer, and cigar smoke is no exception. Regular cigar smoking increases the risk of several types of cancers, including cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus and larynx.
- **Lung and heart disease.** Regular cigar smoking increases the risk of lung diseases, including emphysema and chronic bronchitis. It might also increase the risk of heart disease, such as coronary artery disease.
- **Oral disease.** Cigar smoking has been linked to oral and dental disease, such as gum disease and tooth loss.

Switching from cigarette smoking to cigar smoking can be particularly harmful because you might inhale cigar smoke the way you inhaled cigarette smoke. The more cigars you smoke and the deeper you inhale, the greater the risks.

Although the health effects of occasional cigar smoking aren't as clear, the only safe level of cigar smoking is none at all. Instead of trying to choose between cigarette smoking and cigar smoking, try to quit tobacco entirely. There is no safe form of tobacco.

With

J. Taylor Hays, M.D.

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