

The Star : Smoking: Did you know...

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Monday, 14 September 2009 14:51 -

◆ New Straits Times - 1 October 2006

TOBACCO use, particularly cigarette smoking, is the single most preventable cause of death in the world. It also causes chronic lung disease (emphysema and chronic bronchitis), cardiovascular disease, stroke, cancer and cataracts.

Nicotine, a powerful central nervous system stimulant found naturally in the tobacco leaf, is classified as a drug. It is one of the main ingredients in tobacco. In higher doses, nicotine is extremely poisonous. It is commonly used as an insecticide. The membranes in the nose, mouth and lungs act as nicotine delivery systems transmitting nicotine into the blood and to the brain.

Nicotine is highly addictive. The addictive effect of nicotine is the main reason why tobacco is widely used.

Cigarette smoking causes 87% of lung cancer deaths and is responsible for most cancers of the larynx, oral cavity and pharynx, oesophagus, and bladder.

Tobacco smoke contains thousands of chemical agents, including over 60 substances that are known to cause cancer.

The risk of developing smoking-related cancers, as well as non-cancerous diseases, increases with total lifetime exposure to cigarette smoke.

Smoking cessation has major and immediate health benefits, including decreasing the risk of lung and other cancers, heart attack, stroke, and chronic lung disease.

US Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona issued a comprehensive scientific report on June 26, 2006, which concludes that there is no risk-free level of exposure to second-hand smoke. Non-smokers exposed to second-hand smoke at home or work increase their risk of developing heart disease by 25 to 30% and lung cancer by 20 to 30%.

The report, *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke*, finds that even brief second-hand smoke exposure can cause immediate harm.

Second-hand smoke contains more than 50 cancer-causing chemicals, and is itself a known human carcinogen.

Non-smokers who are exposed to second-hand smoke inhale many of the same toxins as smokers.

Even brief exposure to second-hand smoke has immediate adverse effects on the cardiovascular system and increases risk for heart disease and lung cancer, the report says.

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