

HEALTH MATTERS

Quitting Smoking can be Contagious

Peer influence plays a role

(AP) -- The urge to smoke is contagious, but quitting apparently is, too.

A team of researchers who showed that obesity can spread person-to-person has found a similar pattern with smoking cessation: A smoker is more likely to kick the habit if a spouse, friend, co-worker or sibling did.

What's more, smokers tend to quit in groups and those who don't stop puffing increasingly find themselves pushed to the edge of their social circles, the researchers found.

"Your smoking behavior depends upon not just the smoking behavior of the people you know, but also the people who they know" and so on, said Dr. Nicholas Christakis of the Harvard Medical School and lead author of the new report.

The findings back up previous studies showing that peer influence plays a key role in people's decision to stop lighting up and provide evidence that the "buddy system" used by smoking cessation, weight loss and alcoholism programs to change addictive behavior works.

"Anecdotally, we hear people say they quit smoking because their



When a spouse or friend stops smoking, the odds of the other continuing to smoke drops.

spouse or friend quit," said Jennifer Unger, a smoking prevention expert at the University of Southern California who had no role in the study. "If you influence a few people, those people might go on to help others to quit."

Last year, Christakis and a colleague, James Fowler of the University of California, San Diego, published a study suggesting that obesity can spread among friends, much like an infectious disease. The duo mined data from a large social network of people who had been followed for three decades and found that when one person gained weight, close friends tended to pack on the pounds, too.

Their latest study focused on people's smoking habits in the same social network.

Not surprisingly, the greatest influence was seen in close relationships. When a spouse stops smoking, the other partner is 67 percent less likely to smoke. Similarly, when a friend quits, the odds of the other continuing drops by 36 percent. The odds are similar among co-workers and siblings.

The researchers also found, by analyzing random samples of smoking clusters, that whole groups became nonsmokers over time. People who remained smokers found themselves moving to the fringe of their social circles.

HEALTHWATCH

Ready or Not? -- Thursday, May 28, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., learn how to prepare your family for a major disaster. The class is free. To register, call 503-335-3500.

Bereavement Support Groups -- Free, confidential group meetings for those who have experienced the death of a loved one offered on various nights and locations. For information and registration, call 503-215-4622.

Childbirth Preparation -- Fridays, beginning May 30, from 7 to 9 p.m., the four-week series to help first-time parents prepare for a more comfortable labor and delivery with lectures, practice and discussions; \$85 per couple. To register, call 503-574-6595.

Cardiac-Rehab Exercise Classes -- A medically supervised exercise program for people dealing with heart conditions. For more information, call 503-251-6260.

Cancer Survivors Day -- Saturday, June 1 from 2 to 4 p.m., at Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital's Building Three, Lower Level, cancer survivors and their families, friends and care providers will come together to celebrate life and unveil a new resource center. This free event is open to the public. To register, call 503-335-3500.

Medical Volunteers -- Wallace Medical Concern is welcoming Medical Assistants to volunteer at its Gresham Clinic, 254 N.W. Burnside Road. Contact Cecily Peterson at 503-489-1760, ext 13, or e-mail cecily@wallacemedical.org.

Osteoporosis Screening -- An ultrasound bone-density screening with personalized education; fee \$30. To schedule an appointment, call 503-261-6611.

Arthritis Discoveries -- Tuesday, June 3 from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. the Oasis Center at Macy's 4th Floor, downtown; \$5 fee. For more information, call 503-241-3059.

Infant Massage -- Wednesdays, beginning June 4, from 6:45 to 8 p.m., this four-week class teaches the rhythmic massage strokes designed to relax your baby (up to 6 months) and you; \$45 per couple and baby. To register, call 503-574-6595.

Breaking the Cycle Men's Conference -- Saturday, June 7, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Calvary Christian Center, 126 N.E. Alberta St., will host the workshop for men of all ages to discuss health, nutrition, addiction, communication and other issues facing men today. To register, call 503-422-8573.

Smoking Cessation -- Mondays, beginning June 9, from 7 to 8:30 p.m., this 11-week series will provide support, coping skills, behavior modification, medication, patches; everything needed to stop smoking for a \$225 fee. To register, call 503-574-6595.

Infant CPR -- Monday, June 9 from 6 to 8 p.m., for families with infants' ages 1-12 months, teaching how to perform rescue breathing, CPR and choking maneuvers. This is a non-certifying class; \$34 fee per person. To register, call 503-574-6595.

Caregiver Resource Fair -- Saturday, June 14 from 12:30 to 4 p.m. at the Legacy Emanuel Hospital Lorenzen Conference Center, the PBS documentary "Caring for Your Parents" will explore the complex issues of keeping an aging or disabled parent at home. This is a free event. To register, call 503-413-8018.

Big Brother & Big Sisters -- Saturday, June 21 from 10 to 11 a.m., this special sibling class is for ages 3-6, to help prepare them for their new role as a big brother or sister. Parents must be present. To register, call 503-574-6595.

Free Body Basics -- This physician recommended class is appropriate for all ages and health conditions. Plan to attend this one-session class and learn the simple guidelines for safe exercises, including stretching. Call 503-256-4000 to register.

Managing Chronic Hepatitis C -- Third Wednesday of each month at 5 p.m., the informative session led by a registered nurse to help manage side effects of medications and dosage preparations and administration; doctors referral required. To register, call 503-251-6313.

Stroke Alert Screening -- Check your carotid arteries with a painless ultrasound to assess your risk. Fee \$40. To schedule a screening, call 503-251-6137.

Teen Exercise Fights Cancer *Lowers risk later in life*

(AP) -- Get your daughters off the couch: New research shows exercise during the teen years — starting as young as age 12 — can help protect girls from breast cancer when they're grown. Middle-aged women have long been advised to get active to lower their risk of breast cancer after menopause.

What's new: That starting so young pays off, too.

"This really points to the benefit of sustained physical activity from adolescence through the adult years, to get the maximum benefit," said Dr. Graham Colditz of Washington University School of



Avon Breast Cancer Walk participants pass the Capitol in Washington, D.C. (AP Photo)

Medicine in St. Louis, the study's lead author.

Women who were physically active as teens and young adults were 23 percent less likely to develop premenopausal breast cancer than women who grew up sedentary, the researchers reported.

The biggest impact was regular exercise from ages 12 to 22.

"This is not the extreme athlete," Colditz cautioned.

The women at lowest risk reported doing 3 hours and 15 minutes of running or other vigorous activity a week. For the less athletic, 13 hours a week of walking.

Toylike Lighters Bring Warning from Firefighters

Oregon firefighters are warning consumers about novelty lighters.

"We've known for some time that children and even adults mistake these lighters as toys and end up causing serious injury and even


death," says State Fire Marshal Nancy Orr.

Recently, Maine and Tennessee have issued statewide bans on the sale of toylike lighters; and cities in Arkansas and California have

passed local ordinances banning the sale of these lighters.

The Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal is introducing legislation in 2009 aimed at banning the sale of toylike lighters in Oregon.


"There's no reason a lighter should be designed to look like a child's toy," says Orr. "Lighters are tools and contain a flammable liquid. Making them attractive to children is completely irresponsible."



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