

World 'no tobacco day' puts spotlight on dangers of smoking

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It's not just smokers who are at-risk when it comes to tobacco smoke exposure—and the health concerns of smoking cigarettes are not limited to the most known consequence: lung cancer.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), smoking contributes to one in five (20 percent) of strokes and has links to heart disease. The habit also increases a person's risk for frightening vascular conditions like Buerger's disease, a condition that can lead to hand and feet amputations due to chronic inflammation and blood clots in small and medium-sized veins. Smoking is well known for its links to lung cancer, but it has also been scientifically linked to an increased risk of throat and oral cavity cancers.

May 31, 2012, is World No Tobacco Day, an initiative sponsored by the World [Health](#) Organization to reduce tobacco use across the globe in an effort to improve public health for all. UC Health's thoracic oncology team hopes the day will give smokers who are considering ditching the habit another reason to make the commitment.

"Patients often tell me they smoke to relieve stress or take a break from daily activities and then their smoking becomes a habit," says Valerie Williams, MD, a UC Health thoracic surgeon and assistant professor at the University of Cincinnati (UC) College of Medicine. "The important thing for people to realize is that they don't have to do it alone—help is available. And there is always a benefit to [smoking](#) cessation."

An estimated 45.3 million people (19.3 percent) of all U.S. adults aged 18 years or older smoke cigarettes, according to the CDC. The habit is more common among men, but is the leading cause of preventable death in both genders.

Tristate residents have higher-than-average rates of lung cancer as compared with the national rate of 61.5 per 100,000 people—Ohio is 70.3, Kentucky is 99.3 and Indiana is 75.7.

"Women seem particularly susceptible to [secondhand smoke](#). Although the total number of people being diagnosed and dying from the disease is going down nationally, 1 in 5 women who are diagnosed with lung cancer have rarely, if ever, smoked cigarettes. This rate is much higher compared with [lung cancer](#) rates among nonsmoking men" adds Nagla Karim, MD, a UC Health thoracic oncologist and assistant professor at the UC College of Medicine. "Researchers have only just begun to explore why these gender differences may exist."

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Research also suggests that chronic exposure to secondhand smoke can lead to compromised lung health, including asthma. UC College of Medicine environmental health researchers published data showing negative health effects of early-life exposure to secondhand smoke appear to impact girls more than boys—particularly those with early-life allergic sensitization.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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