COLUMBUS COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Special Feature
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Quit smoking to enjoy big benefits: A gift to your future self

(COLUMBUS, Neb.) – When you decide to quit smoking, you're giving a gift to your future self.

"Quitting smoking is not just a health decision — it's a lifestyle choice that positively impacts various aspects of your well-being," said Nathan Fuerhoff, director of respiratory care at Columbus Community Hospital. "You will not only see the benefits in terms of reduced health risks, but you will also feel them in your day-to-day life. Breathing becomes easier and your overall strength improves."

The moment you decide to quit, you will notice the physical changes right away. In the first 20 minutes after you extinguish your last cigarette, your heart rate and blood pressure begin to drop. This rapid response is a testament to the body's resilience and ability to heal. It's an encouraging sign that even small steps toward quitting have immediate benefits.

A timeline of positive changes

Over the span of a few days after you quit smoking, the carbon monoxide levels in your blood will normalize, contributing to improved oxygenation throughout the body. Within two to 12 weeks, your circulation and lung function will show significant improvement, translating into much better overall respiratory health. By a year after you quit, you will experience much less coughing and shortness of breath.

Beyond the immediate health benefits, quitting smoking has a big impact on long-term health outcomes, too. "After two years of not smoking, the risk of a heart attack significantly diminishes compared to active smokers," said Fuerhoff. "This is a huge milestone that showcases the enduring positive effects of quitting."

As time progresses, the benefits continue to build. Five to 10 years after you first become smoke-free, your risk of mouth, throat and voice box cancers is cut in half, and your likelihood of experiencing a stroke decreases. After a decade without smoking, your risk of lung cancer decreases by 50%, and by the 15-year mark, your risk of heart disease becomes comparable to that of a nonsmoker.

Negative impacts of smoking

On the other hand, if you keep on smoking, it can continue to damage your health. According to the American Cancer Society, smoking is a leading cause of preventable death, contributing to heart disease, stroke and various cancers. The addictive nature of nicotine makes quitting difficult, but with the right support and resources, you can overcome this hurdle.

Health care professionals can help you navigate this challenge successfully and unlock the countless benefits of a smoke-free life.

If you're considering quitting smoking or seeking support, reach out to your doctor for personalized guidance and assistance. Your health care provider can offer tailored advice based on your individual health profile and smoking history. They will be an important partner in your journey toward a healthier, smoke-free life.

Comprehensive respiratory care

The respiratory care team at Columbus Community Hospital plays a big role in supporting overall respiratory wellness. The team works with cardiologists, pulmonologists, primary care doctors and other health care providers to address a wide variety of conditions, including asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), pneumonia, heart failure, trauma and post-surgical care.

Columbus Community Hospital's comprehensive services include advanced cardiac life support (ACLS), neonatal resuscitation program (NRP), pediatric advanced life support (PALS) and basic life support (BLS), ensuring that patients receive the highest standard of care in all situations.

The hospital's diagnostic lab complements these services with a range of noninvasive tests that measure your lung function, oxygen levels, exercise tolerance and cardiac monitoring. The respiratory care programs prioritize patient education, giving individuals and their families knowledge about disease processes, drug actions, self-administration and the use of home oxygen.

To learn more about respiratory care or prepare for a pulmonary function test, you can contact the hospital at 402-562-3170, or visit columbushosp.org and search for "Respiratory care."

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