We have all heard about health risks related to smoking, but do we really listen? It is time to pay attention and fight back against this fatal trend called smoking. Did you know…

- Smoking is responsible for one out of every five deaths in the U.S.
- Compared to nonsmokers, smokers have a ten-fold increase in lung cancer and twice the risk of dying from heart disease.
- Smoking causes chronic lung disease, such as chronic bronchitis and emphysema, which can be fatal
- There is increased risk of stroke, peptic ulcer, osteoporosis, and cataracts.
- Smokers experience an increased risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, larynx, esophagus, pancreas, kidney, bladder, uterus, and cervix.
- Smoking can interfere with your body’s natural healing process.
- Smoking increases wrinkles and makes the skin have a leathery appearance.
- Smoking is very expensive. One pack of cigarettes costs over $3.00!

So, what about cigars and dip, snuff, or smokeless tobacco? They have dangers all their own…

- Cigar smoking increases a person’s risk of heart disease and cancer, especially of the mouth, throat, and lung.
- Cigar smoke contains the same toxic and cancer-causing chemicals as cigarette smoke.
- A single large cigar contains as much tobacco as a pack of cigarettes.
- Just holding a cigar in your mouth can cause nicotine to be absorbed into your body.
- Overall cancer deaths are 34% higher for cigar smokers than for nonsmokers.
- Smokeless tobacco contains nicotine, which is addictive.
- Snuff dippers consume on average more than ten times the amount of cancer-causing agents than cigarette smokers.
- The juice from the smokeless tobacco is directly absorbed through the lining of the mouth. This creates sores and white patches which often lead to cancer of the mouth.
- People who chew tobacco have a higher risk of cancers, including mouth, gum, pharynx, larynx, and esophagus.
- Chronic bad breath, discoloration of teeth and fillings, gum disease, and tooth loss are also common.
Besides being bad for you, smoking (and chewing and dipping) is addictive. That means that once you start, you will have a very difficult time stopping. Nicotine is as addictive, or even more so, than many illicit drugs.

- 70% of high school seniors who smoke between one and five cigarettes a day will still be smoking five years later.
- Even people who have smoked as few as 100 cigarettes report that they cannot quit their habit.
- More than 3 million people under the age of 18 smoke half a billion cigarettes each year and half of them consider themselves dependent on cigarettes.
- The decision to use tobacco is almost always made in the teen years.

Were you listening this time? Quiz yourself using the CDC’s Tobacco Questionnaire and see if you really heard the truth about tobacco products:

1. Smoking is harmful only if you smoke for a long time—20 to 30 years or more.
   a) True
   b) False

2. If you smoke a pack a day for one year, it will cost you about:
   a) $50
   b) $1,000
   c) $1,500
   d) $3,000

3. Nicotine in tobacco is highly addictive.
   a) True
   b) False

4. Spit tobacco is a safe and non-addictive alternative to cigarettes.
   a) True
   b) False

5. Which of the following chemicals are found in cigarette smoke?
   a) Ammonia (used to clean toilets)
b) Cyanide (used to kill rats)

c) Formaldehyde (used to preserve dead frogs)

d) All of the above

6. More than 80% of smokers start before they turn:

a) 18 years old

b) 21 years old

c) 25 years old

7. How many young people become new smokers each day?

a) 1,000

b) 2,000

b) 3,000

8. Tobacco kills more people each year than which of the following causes of death?

a) Illegal drugs

b) Car crashes

c) AIDS

d) All of the above

9. Within two days of quitting smoking, your sense of taste and smell are greatly improved.

a) True

b) False

10. What is the number one source of pollution on California beaches?

a) Oil slicks

b) Hospital waste

c) Cigarette butts
Answers: (b),(b),(a),(b),(d),(a),(c),(d),(a),(c)

**What if you’ve already started?**

- Write down why you want to quit and keep it in a place where you can see it often
- Know that it will not be easy to quit and be aware of the feelings and sensations you will experience as you try to quit.
- Get rid of all of your cigarettes, matches, lighters, and ashtrays
- Have an alternate and incompatible behavior to put in place of smoking (for example, brush your teeth when you have the urge, drink water, or take a run).
- Carry things in your purse or pocket to put in your mouth, such as toothpicks or sugarless gum or candy
- Stay busy and active
- Avoid the places and people that trigger wanting a cigarette
- Go to places where smoking is prohibited.
- Be aware that the first couple of weeks are the toughest, so plan accordingly.
- Know that half of all adult smokers have quit, so you can do it too.
- If you relapse, try, try again.
- Remember to praise yourself for your efforts.
- If you think you need help, get it.

****We like to consider ourselves as independent, yet we continue to allow ourselves to become slaves to tobacco. We see ads in the media where smoking is depicted as cool, sexy, pleasant, yet we do not see the poor individuals dying of lung cancer or trying unsuccessfully to quit over and over. Be your own person; choose not to become or not to stay dependent on any substance!

****If you would like more information on the effects of tobacco or smoking cessation, contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/tobacco or 1-800-CDC-1311, the Florida Quitline at 1-877-822-6669, or call the Cancer Information Center at 1-800-4- CANCER.