Dear Alice,

Can you tell me if running (jogging) and smoking can go together? I smoke about twenty cigarettes per day. Is it good to go to the gym and smoke? Is it better for my health than staying home and watching TV?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Exercising is great for your health, but unfortunately it cannot negate the health consequences of smoking. Even if you live a healthy life in every other aspect, smoking is still detrimental. In terms of physical activity, smoking can cause difficulty breathing, lower energy levels, and make it harder to focus (however, being active does beat staying home and watching TV, whether or not you smoke).

Aside from difficult breathing, smoking presents other risks including cardiovascular disease, different types of cancers, and low bone density, especially in females. It can also lead to decreased sense of taste and smell, as well as changes in appearance including increased facial wrinkling, and yellowing of the teeth and fingernails.

Research suggests that physically active smokers tend to consume fewer cigarettes and are more likely to try quit smoking. However, if quitting isn't in the cards for you just yet, don't put away those running shoes. Any exercise is better than none. It's a good idea to check with your health care provider before beginning a vigorous exercise program, especially if you have any of the following risk factors:

- Long-term physical inactivity
- Over the age of 45
- A family history of heart attack, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes

While regular cardiovascular physical activity such as jogging is recommended for overall health, quitting smoking is equally critical for ensuring your overall and long-term health. Quitting smoking can be challenging and scary, but there are many resources to help. A smoking
cessation program may be a great place to start. Check with your school, workplace, or local health department as they may offer these, or similar, programs. You can also visit the National Cancer Institute's quit-smoking fact sheet[2] or call 1.800.QUITNOW for quitting information, resources, and advice.

Good luck!

Alice!

Category:
Alcohol & Other Drugs [3]
Cigarettes, Chewing Tobacco, & Other Nicotine [4]

Related questions

Weight gain and quitting smoking [5]
Convincing someone to give up smoking [6]
Is it better to be fit and fat, or unfit and thin? [7]
Smoking's effects on sex [8]

Resources

Medical Services (Morningside) [9]
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