

May 31 is World No Tobacco Day: Take a Step to Health

Every year on May 31st, the World Health Organization (WHO) and partners around the world celebrate World No Tobacco Day. This day aims to draw attention to the health risks associated with tobacco use and promote effective policies to reduce the tobacco addiction epidemic.

Tobacco is more than just a "bad habit"; it is a chronic disease that kills more than 8 million people worldwide each year.

Why is tobacco so dangerous?

Tobacco smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals, at least 250 of which are harmful, and 69 cause cancer. It affects all body systems:

- **Lungs:** 90% of lung cancer cases are related to smoking. COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) and emphysema are the constant companions of smokers.

- **Heart and Blood Vessels:** Smoking is the leading cause of coronary heart disease, heart attacks, and strokes. Nicotine constricts blood vessels, and carbon monoxide replaces oxygen in the blood.

- **Appearance:** Yellow teeth, dull skin, premature wrinkles, brittle hair, and bad breath.

- **Reproductive System:** Decreased fertility, impotence in men, pregnancy complications, and fetal risks in women.

Myths about Modern Alternatives

In recent years, vapes, e-cigarettes, and heated tobacco systems have become increasingly popular. It's important to understand: **there are no safe forms of tobacco.**

- **Vapes** contain nicotine, heavy metals (nickel, tin, lead), and diacetyl (harmful to the lungs).

- **Snus and naswar** increase the risk of oral and pancreatic cancer.

- **Hookahs** contain high concentrations of carbon monoxide and bacteria transmitted through the mouthpiece. Quitting smoking is not a loss, but a gain. Imagine what happens to your body when you stop poisoning yourself with smoke:

- **After 20 minutes:** Your heart rate and blood pressure return to normal.

- **After 12 hours:** Carbon monoxide levels in your blood drop to normal.

- **After 2-12 weeks:** Your circulation improves, making breathing easier.

- **After 1 year:** Your risk of coronary heart disease is halved.

- **After 5 years:** Your risk of stroke is equal to that of a nonsmoker.

- **After 10 years:** Your risk of lung cancer is reduced by 50%.

Plus, you'll save a significant amount of money, your clothes will no longer smell, and food will taste its best.

How can you help yourself or a loved one?

If you decide to quit smoking today, it's a great day to start a new life. Here are a few steps:

1. **Choose a quit date.** Let it be May 31st or the following morning.
2. **Remove temptations.** Throw away all cigarettes, ashtrays, and lighters from your home, car, and bag.
3. **Notify your loved ones.** Ask for support from family and friends, and warn them that the first few days may be irritable.
4. **Change your ritual.** The urge to smoke often passes in 3-5 minutes. During this time, drink water, chew carrots, chew mint gum, or twirl a pen in your fingers.
5. **See a doctor.** Specialized smoking cessation clinics operate in the Republic of Belarus. They are usually called "smoking cessation clinics (schools)" and operate at drug treatment centers, psychiatric departments, hygiene and epidemiology centers, and some central district hospitals.

You can seek help either anonymously or officially. In most cases, an appointment with a **psychiatrist/narcologist** or **psychotherapist** at your local clinic is sufficient—they will tell you where the nearest specialized clinic is. The doctor may prescribe nicotine replacement therapy (patches, chewing gum) or prescription medications that reduce nicotine cravings.

Today is the best day

World No Tobacco Day is a reason not only to think, but also to act. If you don't smoke, support those trying to quit. If you smoke, try to go 24 hours without a cigarette. This will be the first and most important step toward your health.

Take care of yourself and those around you. After all, breathing deeply is true happiness.

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