



Let's
Talk
About...

Seniors and Smoking

How many seniors smoke?

Smoking is not common among seniors. In fact, seniors are the least likely of any adult demographic in Canada to smoke. However, 11% of men and 9% of women over the age of 65 still report using tobacco daily or occasionally, which means that smoking is still cause for concern among doctors and other health-care professionals.

Benefits of quitting

It is never too late to quit smoking. Within days of quitting, it becomes easier to breathe, and a person's sense of taste and smell will improve. Non-smokers recover from surgeries and fall-related injuries faster than smokers. And long-term smokers will actually see short-term health benefits faster than those who have only been smoking for a short time.

Challenges

Seniors present unique challenges for the health-care system, especially those who live in long-term care facilities. Operators of such facilities must work within all applicable bylaws and legislation to accommodate seniors who use tobacco, as well as those who are attempting to quit.

Strategies for quitting

Seniors can use many of the same strategies that are used by smokers of other ages. These include avoiding places where others smoke, removing ashtrays and other objects that remind them of smoking from their homes, finding other ways to deal with stress and using the four Ds to handle cravings (deep breathe, distract yourself, delay smoking by five minutes and drink water).

Just convincing yourself that you can quit smoking can make a difference. You are more likely to successfully quit if you believe that you can do it.

Set yourself up for success by making a complete plan to quit. Set a quit date ahead of time, and seek support from family and friends to help keep you tobacco free. Others find it helpful to add counselling or medication (e.g., nicotine replacement therapies like gums, patches, inhalers or lozenges) to their quitting plan.

For more options for quitting tobacco, visit albertaquits.ca or call the confidential helpline at 1-866-710-QUIT (7848).