**Smoking or** – **The Pill, the Patch, the Ring**

* Smoking IS dangerous
* Women who smoke and use the pill, patch, or ring are taking serious health risks
* Women who smoke should consider other equally effective methods – including the shot and the IUD
* Women 35 and older who smoke and use the pill, patch, or ring are 10 times more likely tohave a heart attack than women who don't smoke or use these methods

**Methods with combined hormones are the most popular reversible forms of birth control.**

They contain both estrogen and progestin. These are like the hormones made by a woman's ovaries Usually, they prevent the ovaries from releasing an egg – ovulation. They can also thicken the cervical mucus. This prevents sperm from joining with an egg.

**There are three methods that use both hormones.**

* the pill - taken dally
* the patch - Ortho Evra - applied once a week for three weeks
* the ring - NuvaRlng - placed in the vagina for three weeks

Millions of women use the pill, the patch, or the ring. They can be more than 99 percent effective - if they are used correctly. They are safer than pregnancy and childbirth for nonsmoking women of all ages. And they are convenient.

**The pill, patch, and ring have many advantages.**

* They offer highly effective birth control.
* They are easily reversed.
* There is nothing to do right before sex to protect against pregnancy.

Results of long-term studies on the patch and ring won't be known for some time. But scientists believe that they are very likely to have the non-contraceptive advantages of the pill:

* ability to become pregnant returns quickly when use is stopped
* fewer ectopic pregnancies (not in the uterus)
* fewer infections of the fallopian tubes - a condition that can cause infertility
* fewer noncancerous breast growths
* fewer ovarian cysts
* fewer premenstrual symptoms, as well as related headaches and depression
* less acne
* less excess body hair
* less iron deficiency anemia that can result from heavy menses
* less menstrual flow and cramping less vaginal dryness and painful intercourse
* associated with menopause
* more regular, shorter periods
* protection against osteoporosis - loss of bone mass
* reduced risk of cancer of the lining of the uterus and of the ovaries

**Smoking is one of American women's greatest health risks.**

* Women who smoke die nearly seven years sooner thannonsmokers.
* Women who smoke are 13 times as likely as nonsmokers to develop lung cancer. It is the number one cause ofcancer death for U.S. women.
* Smokers are nearly four times more likely to get cervical cancer than women who don't smoke.
* Smokers have twice as much heart disease as people who don't. Those who smoke two packs or more a day have three times as much heart disease.
* Smoking is also associated with cancers of the bladder, colon, esophagus, kidney, liver, mouth, pancreas, rectum, stomach, and throat.
* Smoking seems to promote the recurrence of genital warts.
* Smoking is associated with early menopause.

**Smoking is associated with decreased fertility.** Women who smoke take longer to get pregnant than nonsmokers. Smokers also have much higher rates of miscarriage.

Smoking during Pregnancy

* causes premature birth
* leads to low birth weight, which causes other health problems
* increases the risk of infant death just after birth by 25 percent

Smoking also is a health risk for "secondary smokers" – those who breathe in other people's smoke - especially children.

**Smoking and using the pill, the patch, or the ring can be a deadly mix.**

**All medications have some side effects and pose some health risks. This is also true of the pill, patch, and ring. But to a much lesser degree than smoking.**

* Side effects may include irregular bleeding, breast tenderness, nausea (rarely, vomiting), and changes in mood.
* Rare but serious health risks include blood clots, heart attack, stroke, and liver tumors. The chance of developing some of these problems increases with age.

Smokers who use one of these methods take very serious health risks. The older the woman is and the more she smokes, the greater her danger. The risk of death is much higher for women age 35 and older who smoke and use the pill, patch, or ring than it is for nonsmokers. They are nearly 10 times more likely to have a heart attack than women who don't smoke or use one of these methods.

**If you are age 35 or older and smoke and want to use the pill, the patch, or the ring, you must give up one or the other.**

This is especially true if you have diabetes, high blood pressure, or elevated cholesterol. These conditions further increase the risk of heart attack or stroke.

You must choose another form of birth control if you cannot stop smoking. The shot and the IUD – intrauterine device - are also highly effective methods. And they can be used safely by women who smoke.

**Quitting smoking may save your life.**

It isn't easy to quit smoking. The physical withdrawal symptoms may last up to two weeks. And the psychological addiction may be more long lasting and difficult. But quitting greatly reduces your health risks.

Within one year of quitting, a smoker's risk of heart disease is cut by half. Five years after quitting an ex-smoker's chance of heart attack and stroke drops to about the same as the risk of someone who never smoked at all.

Ten years after quitting, the risk of developing lung cancer becomes about the same as a nonsmoker's.

**You may be able to stop cold. If not**

* Enroll in a behavior modification program.
* Try using a nicotine substitute - skin patch or chewing gum.
* Talk with your clinician about prescription medication that can help you.

**In the meantime**

* Save the money you would have spent on cigarettes to buy something special.
* Exercise - take brisk walks.
* Hang out with nonsmokers.
* Munch on low-calorie vegetables. Keep a list of reasons you want to quit and refer to it often.
* Get the support of family and friends.
* Practice deep breathing and relaxation.
* Chew sugarless gum.
* Drink cold water.

**Programs to help you stop smoking are widely available. Many have high success rates. Get support for your effort to stop smoking - whether or not you decide to use the pill, the patch, or the ring. Call or look online for information:**

The American Cancer Society, 1-800-227-2345,www.cancer.org

National Cancer Institute, 1-800-4 CANCER, www.cancer gov

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and

Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 1-770-488-5705, www.cdc.gov/tobacco

Check out your local hospital, or other community organization for stop-smoking programs.

**If you've tried to quit smoking and failed, try to cut down.**

* Don't smoke down to the end of the cigarette.
* Take fewer puffs on a cigarette.
* Cut down the amount you inhale.
* Cut down the number of cigarettes you smoke each day.

Remember: There is no "safe" level of smoking. But the less you smoke the fewer risks you run.

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