

PUBLIC HEALTH

Why Smoking Called Habit

➤ IF YOU HAVE trouble kicking the cigarette habit, you can at least take consolation in the fact that it is not as hard to ditch as morphine, barbiturates or alcohol addiction.

This does not mean that it is going to be easy to give up your dependence on cigarettes.

However, the biological effects of tobacco—like those of coffee, tea and cocoa, which contain caffeine, and betel nuts, which contain arecoline—are not comparable to the effects of addicting drugs. The effects of the former are mainly psychological rather than physical.

All it takes to stop smoking cigarettes is will power. But if you can not muster the will power, you can take comfort in the fact that you are hurting only yourself and not all of society.

The World Health Organization expert committee on drugs that are liable to produce addiction compares addiction with habituation this way:

DRUG ADDICTION: a state of periodic or chronic intoxication produced by the repeated consumption of a drug (natural or synthetic). Its characteristics include:

1. An overpowering desire or need (compulsion) to continue taking the drug and to obtain it by any means.
2. A tendency to increase the dose.
3. A psychic (psychological) and generally a physical dependence on the effects of the drug.
4. Detrimental effect on the individual and on society.

DRUG HABITUATION: a condition resulting from the repeated consumption of a drug. Its characteristics include:

1. A desire, but not a compulsion, to continue taking the drug for the sense of improved well-being which it engenders.

2. Little or no tendency to increase the dose.

3. Some degree of psychic dependence on the effect of the drug but absence of physical dependence and hence of an abstinence syndrome.

4. Detrimental effects, if any, primarily on the individual.

Here are some measures listed by the Advisory Committee that have been used to cure the tobacco habit:

Psychoanalytic techniques, hypnotism, antismoking campaigns based upon fear of health consequences, religion, group psychotherapy similar to Alcoholics Anonymous, and tranquilizing or stimulant drugs.

Use of astringent mouth washes of silver nitrate and copper sulfate, bitters (quinine or quassia), local anesthetics (benzocaine lozenges), substitute tastes with essential oils and flavors, and atropine or stramonium which produce a dry mouth.

Lobeline, a substance from Indian tobacco with weak nicotine-like actions, as a nicotine substitute has had extensive trials, and commercial preparations are available. However, its value has not been proved.

Any benefit from the cigarette smoking habit appears to lie in the field of mental health. The committee points out, nevertheless, that even the most energetic and emotional campaigner against smoking and nicotine has been able to find little support for the view that all those who use tobacco, coffee, tea and cocoa are in need of mental care.

At some time in the future it may be shown that smokers and nonsmokers have different psychologic characteristics but so far no definite "smoker personality" has been defined.

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Less Harmful Cigarette Seen Possible by Expert

➤ A LESS HARMFUL cigarette can be produced if the tobacco industry, agriculture experts and Government agencies unite in research, Dr. Ernest L. Wynder of the Sloan-Kettering Institute for Cancer Research, New York, said in Washington, D. C.

Primary action now, he told Georgetown University medical students in a talk on environmental influence on cancer, would be in public education and in research on how to produce a less harmful cigarette. Such research should be in the area of filters and in the curing, cutting and packing of tobacco, he said.

Some filtered cigarettes are now available, he said, which show progress in making cigarettes safer.

Several of Dr. Wynder's cigarette reports were among those studied by the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee, which on Jan. 11 released its report indicting cigarette smoking as a health menace.

Dr. Wynder developed a "smoking machine" which has been exhibited as an ingenious device for the collection of tar for research.

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Withdrawal Clinics For Smokers Thrive

➤ MORE SMOKING withdrawal research clinics are predicted as a result of the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee report on the health effects of smoking.

Roswell Park Memorial Institute at Buffalo has held five clinics since last August, for nearly 250 persons trying to ditch the cigarette habit.

The Institute's clinics are part of a research program. If the program works, the methods will be turned over to other organizations for development into a nationwide system, said Dr. Charles A. Ross, the Institute's director.

At the clinics, a nicotine substitute to ease the craving for tobacco is given along with an appetite depressant. Each participant answers brief questions in psychological tests and completes report forms during the first week.

After this has been done, the group meets to discuss problems or progress. Once a month for the next half year, participants report by mail on how they are doing.

Valid results will not be available until prolonged followup studies are completed, but Dr. Ross says "indications are very good that a large percentage of those who stopped smoking during the first week of the clinic will still not be smoking at the end of the six-month period."

The American Cancer Society is sponsoring courses on how to break the cigarette habit.

More business firms also are expected to follow the example of Franklin National Bank, Long Island, N. Y., which permits its 1,350 employes in 50 branches to smoke only in washrooms.

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Cigarette Actions Asked

➤ SHORT CUTS to quick action on cigarette dangers without another 14-month committee study are outlined by Sen. Maurine B. Neuberger (D-Ore.) in two bills.

The first would "confer upon the Federal Trade Commission the power and duty to regulate the advertising and labeling of cigarettes."

The second, called the Cigarette Health Hazards Act, would authorize the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare to coordinate Government policy and authorize grants for research into how to remove hazardous substances from cigarette smoke, once they are identified.

Sen. Neuberger also calls on the U.S. Department of Agriculture to "play an unaccustomed role in the development of less hazardous cigarettes." USDA should place its research and development facilities at the service of the public and of the tobacco industry in developing less lethal tobacco, she said.

Elimination of advertising that would make cigarettes attractive to children and adolescents was asked by Sen. Neuberger in a letter to Paul Rand Dixon, chairman of the Federal Trade Commission.

Labeling, not only of cigarette packages but of advertising, should contain a warning that habitual cigarette smoking is injurious to health, she said.

Sen. Neuberger claims that the American consumer has come to believe that what is advertised may not be "the great bargain" that it is represented to be, but, "thanks to the watchful eye of his Government, it will, at least, not kill him."

The American Tobacco Company received a pat on the back in the Senator's letter for joining the ranks of those acknowledging the significance of tar and nicotine yields in filter and nonfilter cigarettes. She said no advertising should make extravagant claims of benefit from specific filters, however.

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