

# Smoking and Influenza

Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory disease caused by the influenza virus.<sup>1</sup> Symptoms of the flu often include fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, headaches, and fatigue.<sup>1</sup> Occasionally, the flu may cause diarrhea or vomiting, although this is more common among children than adults.<sup>1</sup> Severe cases of influenza can result in hospitalization or death.<sup>1</sup> People who smoke may be more susceptible to respiratory infections like influenza, and people with smoking-related chronic illnesses may be at increased risk of flu-related complications.<sup>2,4</sup>

## Influenza Risk among Smokers

In 2016, over 1 in 5 Hoosier adults (21.1%) smoked cigarettes.<sup>3</sup> Cigarette smoking can harm the immune system, which may increase the risk of respiratory infections such as influenza.<sup>2</sup> People who smoke also have a higher risk of dying from respiratory infections such as influenza and pneumonia.<sup>2</sup>

## Smoking-related Health Conditions and Influenza

Smoking increases the risk of a number of chronic health conditions, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.<sup>2</sup> Adults with these conditions are at greater risk of flu-related complications that may result in hospitalization or death.<sup>4</sup>

## Secondhand Smoke Exposure and Respiratory Diseases among Children

Exposure to secondhand smoke increases the risk of a number of respiratory health problems among children, including lower respiratory illnesses.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, exposure to secondhand smoke can worsen the frequency and severity of asthma attacks among children with asthma.<sup>5</sup> Children with chronic health problems such as asthma are at greater risk of flu-related complications.<sup>6</sup>

## Steps to Protect Yourself and Your Family

- Getting a flu vaccine each year is the best way to prevent the flu.<sup>1</sup>
- Good hygiene practices, including covering coughs and sneezes and frequent handwashing, can help reduce the spread of the flu virus.<sup>1</sup>
- If you do have the flu, staying home while you are sick can help prevent spreading the flu to others.<sup>7</sup>
- For those who smoke, quitting smoking reduces the risk of smoking-related health problems.<sup>8</sup>
- For Hoosiers interested in quitting cigarettes or other forms of tobacco, the Indiana Tobacco Quitline (1-800-QUIT-NOW, [www.QuitNowIndiana.com](http://www.QuitNowIndiana.com)) provides free evidence-based support, advice and resources.
- To prevent health complications due to secondhand smoke, do not allow smoking in your home or vehicle.

## Quick Facts

- Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory disease caused by the influenza virus.<sup>1</sup>
- People who smoke may have an increased risk of respiratory diseases like influenza.<sup>2</sup>
- Over 1 in 5 Hoosier adults (21.1%) were current smokers in 2016.<sup>3</sup>
- Smoking increases the risk of several chronic diseases including COPD, diabetes, and heart disease. People with these conditions have an increased risk of flu-related complications.<sup>2,4</sup>
- Children exposed to secondhand smoke have an increased risk of lower respiratory illnesses.<sup>5</sup>
- Quitting smoking reduces the risk of smoking-related health problems.<sup>8</sup>
- The Indiana Tobacco Quitline (1-800-QUIT NOW) provides free support and resources to Hoosiers who want to quit.

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## References

- <sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016, August 25). Key Facts about Influenza (Flu). Retrieved December 19, 2016, from <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm>.
- <sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Smoking: 50 Years of Progress. A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014. Printed with corrections, January 2014.
- <sup>3</sup> Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2016.
- <sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016, August 25). People at High Risk of Developing Flu-Related Complications. Retrieved December 19, 2016, from [https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high\\_risk.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm).
- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006.
- <sup>6</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016, December 15). Children, the Flu, and the Flu Vaccine. Retrieved December 19, 2016 from <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children.htm>.
- <sup>7</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017, August 1). CDC Says “Take 3” Actions to Fight the Flu. Retrieved February 21, 2017 from <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/preventing.htm>.
- <sup>8</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016, December 1). Quitting Smoking. Retrieved December 19, 2016 from [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/cessation/quitting/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/cessation/quitting/index.htm).

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