# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & SMOKING

## Key Messages for Patients and the Public

### Overview

Smoking and physical activity are 2 of the top 3 risk factors for early death and chronic disease that people can change.

### The Link between Smoking and Physical Activity

- Young adults who are physically active are less likely to smoke and more likely to avoid smoking as adults.²
- People who are physically active have less desire to smoke, ³ fewer cravings for tobacco and fewer withdrawal symptoms if they stop smoking.²,⁴ Physical activity can help people to quit smoking when exercise is combined with nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) such as a nicotine patch, gum or inhaler ⁵ and exercise delays weight gain in women who quit smoking.⁶
- People who are not physically active may be more depressed, which may cause them to smoke or smoke more often.¹
- Exercise can improve feelings of depression, anxiety, psychosocial stress, sleep patterns, cognitive functioning, and self-esteem, which can help people to stop smoking and stay smoke free.⁶
- A small increase in physical activity can significantly reduce the risk of developing a chronic disease.⁸
- Participating in physical activity can help people to quit smoking and remain smoke-free. Exercise also has many other important health benefits.², ⁴, ⁵, ⁹
- Exercise may be an alternative for some people who are unable or unwilling to take nicotine replacement therapy (NRT). Exercise may also help people cope with cue-induced cravings.¹⁰
- Airway resistance refers to a narrowing of the air passages, which in turn affects the rate at which air moves in and out of the lungs. According to the Non-smokers Movement of Australia, inhalation of smoke from a cigarette can cause a three-fold increase in airway resistance. Airway resistance is also influenced by other smoking-related consequences such as tar build-up and inflammation of the mucous membranes in the respiratory tract, thus making it difficult to obtain the increased amounts of oxygen needed by the body when undertaking activities such as playing sports.¹¹
Helpful Resources

- The CAMH (Center for Addiction and Mental Health) Nicotine Dependence Service [www.camh.net](http://www.camh.net)
- Smokers’ Helpline [www.smokershelpline.ca](http://www.smokershelpline.ca) (1 877 513-5333)
- ParticipACTION. [http://www.participaction.com](http://www.participaction.com)
- Act Now BC. How does smoking affect athletic performance? [http://www.actnowbc.ca/families/how_does_tobacco_affect_athletic_performance](http://www.actnowbc.ca/families/how_does_tobacco_affect_athletic_performance)
- [http://www.participaction.com](http://www.participaction.com)

References