

asac action

January 2009

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New Years Resolutions

By Amy Smith, Prevention Specialist

As the New Year is quickly approaching us, have you considered making your new year's resolution to quit smoking? What better time than January 1, 2009 to take one of the most important steps to improve your health than to be smoke free!

No matter how old you are or how long you've smoked, quitting can help you live longer and be healthier. Smoking is the number one preventable cause of premature death in the United States. People who stop smoking before age 50 cut their risk of dying in the next 15 years in half compared with those who keep smoking. Quitting smoking lowers the risk of lung cancer, other cancers, heart attack, stroke, and chronic lung disease. Women who stop smoking before pregnancy or during the first 3 to 4 months of pregnancy reduce their risk of having a low birth-weight baby to that of women who never smoked.

Besides the many health benefits, there are other reasons for kicking the habit. Smoking is expensive! Based on the national average of \$4.26 per pack of cigarettes, a pack-a-day smoker can save over \$1,500 a year by quitting smoking! And after 10 years, this would be a savings of over \$15,000. In addition, smoking is dangerous to the health of those around you, especially your loved ones. Studies have shown that secondhand smoke causes thousands of deaths each year from lung cancer and heart disease in healthy non-smokers. Babies and children raised in an environment where there is smoking have more ear infection, colds, bronchitis and other lung and breathing problems than children from non-smoking families.

So, are you ready to take the challenge to be smoke free in 2009 and to be great examples to all those you know and love? If you are, just know that there is help for you! There are a wide range of counseling services, self-help materials, and medicines available today to help you on your way. For more information, please call Breathe Easy Coalition at 390-1884 or Quitline Iowa at 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

Heart of Iowa Donation Needs

ASAC's Heart of Iowa Mother and Child Recovery Center is in need of toddler size clothing, sizes 2T and 4T, and children's books. If you have items to donate, please drop them off at either Heart of Iowa, 4050 Bowling Street SW, or ASAC's main campus at 3601 16th Avenue SW in Cedar Rapids. A tax receipt will be provided for all donations.

Please contact Laurel Merrick at (319) 390-4611 if you have any questions or other items available for donation.

What Does A.A. Do?

1. A.A. members share their experience with anyone seeking help with a drinking problem; they give person-to-person service or “sponsorship” to the alcoholic coming to A.A. from any source.
2. The A.A. program, set forth in our Twelve Steps, offers the alcoholic a way to develop a satisfying life without alcohol.
3. This program is discussed at A.A. group meetings.
 - a. Open speaker meetings — open to alcoholics and nonalcoholics. (Attendance at an open A.A. meeting is the best way to learn what A.A. is, what it does, and what it does not do.) At speaker meetings, A.A. members “tell their stories.” They describe their experiences with alcohol, how they came to A.A., and how their lives have changed as a result of Alcoholics Anonymous.
 - b. Open discussion meetings — one member speaks briefly about his or her drinking experience, and then leads a discussion on A.A. recovery or any drinking-related problem anyone brings up. (Closed meetings are for A.A.s or anyone who may have a drinking problem.)
 - c. Closed discussion meetings — conducted just as open discussions are, but for alcoholics or prospective A.A.s only.
 - d. Step meetings (usually closed) — discussion of one of the Twelve Steps.
 - e. A.A. members also take meetings into correctional and treatment facilities.
 - f. A.A. members may be asked to conduct the informational meetings about A.A. as a part of A.S.A.P. (Alcohol Safety Action Project) and D.W.I. (Driving While Intoxicated) programs. These meetings about A.A. are not regular A.A. group meetings.

A.A. World Services, Inc., Box 459, Grand Central Station,
New York, NY 10163. Tel. (212) 870-3400. www.aa.org

A Family Guide To Keeping Youth Mentally Healthy & Drug Free is a public education web site developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to communicate to parents and other caring adults about how they can help promote their child’s mental health and reduce his or her risk for becoming involved with alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.

With content focusing on children aged 7 to 18, the site includes topics such as how to better communicate with young people, activities for promoting “family time,” and what to say when discussing difficult issues. SAMHSA considers this just one tool that can be used to influence children’s lives. Indeed, family life is but one area of a child’s life that affects their behavior. Children, peers, schools, communities, and society all play a role as well. Accordingly, SAMHSA maintains and supports other initiatives that can help reduce children’s risk. To learn more about SAMHSA and the research and programs it supports, please visit <http://www.samhsa.gov>.

Note of Thanks

On behalf of myself and my family we would like to thank all the people who called, sent cards, signed cards, and kept us in their thoughts and prayers at the time of our daughter’s death.

We appreciate all the support and caring that was shown our family. Please know that the kindness will not be forgotten.

Tom and Mary Morrissey and family.

NIDA InfoFacts: Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine is a very addictive stimulant drug that affects the central nervous system. It is a Schedule II stimulant, which means it has a high potential for abuse and is available only through a prescription that cannot be refilled. However, its medical uses are limited and the doses prescribed are much lower than those typically abused. Most of the methamphetamine abused in this country comes from foreign or domestic superlabs, although it can also be made in small, illegal laboratories, where its production endangers the people in the labs, neighbors, and the environment.

How is Methamphetamine Abused?

Methamphetamine is a white, odorless, bitter-tasting crystalline powder that easily dissolves in water or alcohol and is taken orally, intranasally (snorting the powder), by needle injection, or by smoking.

How Does Methamphetamine Affect the Brain?

Methamphetamine increases the release of very high levels of the brain chemical dopamine, which is involved in motivation, the experience of pleasure, and motor function, and is a common mechanism of action for most drugs of abuse.

Chronic methamphetamine abuse significantly changes how the brain functions. Noninvasive human brain imaging studies have shown alterations in the activity of the dopamine system that are associated with reduced motor performance and impaired verbal learning. Recent studies in chronic methamphetamine abusers have also revealed severe structural and functional changes in areas of the brain associated with emotion and memory, which may account for many of the emotional and cognitive problems observed in chronic methamphetamine abusers.

Long-term methamphetamine abuse can also lead to addiction—a chronic, relapsing disease, characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, and accompanied by chemical and molecular changes in the brain. Some of these changes persist long after methamphetamine abuse is stopped, and some reverse after sustained periods of abstinence (e.g., 2 years).

What Other Adverse Effects Does Methamphetamine Have on Health?

Taking even small amounts of methamphetamine can result in increased wakefulness, increased physical activity, decreased appetite, increased respiration, rapid heart rate, irregular heartbeat, increased blood pressure, and hyperthermia.

Long-term methamphetamine abuse has many negative consequences, including extreme weight loss, severe dental problems, anxiety, confusion, insomnia, mood disturbances, and violent behavior. Chronic methamphetamine abusers can also display a number of psychotic features, including paranoia, visual and auditory hallucinations, and delusions (for example, the sensation of insects creeping under the skin).

Also, transmission of HIV and hepatitis B and C can be consequences of methamphetamine abuse. Among abusers who inject the drug, HIV and other infectious diseases can be spread through contaminated needles, syringes, and other injection equipment that is used by more than one person. The intoxicating effects of methamphetamine, regardless of how it is taken, can also alter judgment and inhibition and lead people to engage in unsafe behaviors. Methamphetamine abuse may also worsen the progression of HIV and its consequences. Studies of methamphetamine abusers who are HIV positive indicate that the HIV causes greater neuronal injury and cognitive impairment compared with HIV-positive people who do not use the drug.

What Treatment Options Exist?

Currently, the most effective treatments are behavioral. For example, the Matrix Model, a comprehensive behavioral treatment approach that combines behavioral therapy, family education, individual counseling, 12-Step support, drug testing, and encouragement for nondrug-related activities, has been shown to be effective in reducing methamphetamine abuse. Contingency management interventions, which provide tangible incentives in exchange for engaging in treatment and maintaining abstinence, have also been shown to be effective. There are no medications at this time approved to treat methamphetamine addiction; however, this is an active area of research for NIDA.

Need Help?

If you, or someone you know, have a problem with meth, get help now. Call ASAC's Novus Center at (319) 364-0587. The Novus Center utilizes the Matrix treatment program in addressing cocaine and methamphetamine additions.