



# *Health* CONNECTIONS

YOUR HEALTH, YOUR LIFE

TASTE OR  
TOSS IT  
BEHIND THE  
BEST-BY DATE

IS IT A COLD,  
THE FLU  
OR COVID-19?

DO IT FOR THEM  
**Motivation to  
Quit Smoking**

# CHECK THAT DATE!

When is the last time you checked your household inventory?

## KITCHEN

Most dates on packaging are not safety dates but recommendations to ensure peak quality or taste of the product, with the exception of infant formula. Never use expired formula and discard opened powdered formula after 30 days, if not consumed.

Canned food is safe for two to five years after the best-by date — although high-acid foods like tomatoes are best used within 18 months. How long fresh produce will last depends on the type. The USDA app FoodKeeper can provide guidance for specific items.

Open foods that have expired often show visible signs of deterioration, such as mold, but what about that can of beans with a “Best By” date from six months ago or longer?

If the can isn’t bulging or otherwise suspect, you should be fine. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), you can eat many packaged foods beyond their best-by dates. In general, if a food item smells, looks or feels off, then it is likely time to throw it away.



## VANITY DRAWERS

Whether you buy designer lipstick or drugstore mascara, all makeup deteriorates at similar rates. As with food, expiration dates are rules of thumb and not actual safety guidelines.

However, the Food and Drug Administration and cosmetic trade groups all agree that eye products should be replaced more frequently than any other kind of makeup — every three to six months. If you have any kind of eye infection, that warrants prompt disposal.

Also, if you dip your finger into a product to apply it, you should replace it more frequently, because even a clean fingertip will add microorganisms to the makeup that could turn into bacteria or fungi.



## MEDICINE CABINET

Multiple studies have shown most drugs maintain their potency for years, if not decades, after the original expiration date. (Reporting from ProPublica in 2017 found that even the FDA does it!)

However, the FDA does not recommend anyone take over-the-counter and prescribed drugs past their expiration dates. For example, taking expired antibiotics may lead to antibiotic resistance or other complications.

Still, even though drugs might not go bad a year later doesn’t mean that you should keep unused prescriptions around, especially if they are controlled substances like opioids. The FDA recommends tossing any drugs you aren’t using. In order to do so safely, many police stations, health departments and hospitals, including Barstow Community Hospital, have easy ways for you to drop off old medicine.



You can help keep chemicals out of our landfills and waterways. Properly dispose of all unwanted medications for free at Barstow’s Household Hazardous Waste Bin, located at 900 S. Avenue H in Barstow, on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.



# Eat HEALTHY for Your Heart

Whether you're worried about your heart health or want to make sure you won't have to be, every day is a good day to start eating a heart-smart diet.

Healthy eating and regular exercise are habits people at any age can adopt to prevent cardiovascular disease, according to the American Heart Association (AHA). That's not to say you can't ever have the occasional fried chicken sandwich, but you have to balance out your unhealthy splurges. Here's what the AHA recommends.

- **Don't eat more calories than you need.** Depending on your size, activity level and whether you're trying to lose weight, your daily caloric intake might need to be higher or lower than the average 2,000 calorie basis for nutrition facts labels. Determine how many calories you should be eating and then stay within that limit most days.
- **Do eat whole foods.** Your diet should revolve around fruits and vegetables, lean protein like fish, whole grains, low-fat dairy, nuts, and legumes. Limit intake of fats and oils to heart-healthy options, such as olive oil or avocados.
- **Skip foods high in salt and added sugars.** To curtail high blood pressure, try to limit sodium to less than 2,300mg per day, although 1,500mg per day does a better job. Added sugars, including high-fructose corn syrup, should be limited to 100 calories or six teaspoons for women and 150 calories or nine teaspoons of for men per day.
- **Limit alcohol use.** Although there have been varying studies to determine whether a daily glass of wine is good for your heart, the verdict is still out. The AHA recommends sticking to no more than one drink a day, whether it's wine or beer or whiskey, for a woman and two for a man.

## CHOLESTEROL: THE GOOD, THE BAD AND TRIGLYCERIDES

Ramin Ashtiani, M.D., Cardiologist and independent member of the medical staff at Barstow Community Hospital, reminds you that your body needs cholesterol to function. But if there's too much cholesterol, your arteries can become clogged. Dr. Ashtiani goes on to explain not all cholesterol is the same. Here's what you should know.

**High-density lipoprotein (HDL)** is often referred to as "good" cholesterol because it carries excess cholesterol to your liver to be removed. Men should have more than 40 mg/dL in their blood, and women should have more than 50 mg/dL.


**Low-density lipoprotein (LDL)** is often called "bad" cholesterol. People should have less than 100 mg/dL.

**Very-low-density lipoprotein (VLDL)** carries triglycerides to tissues in your body. Triglycerides are fats found in oils and butter, and having high levels of them increases your risk of heart disease. A healthy VLDL level is under 30 mg/dL, and a healthy level of triglycerides is under 150 mg/dL.



Concerned about your heart health? Get answers you can take to your provider with our free, five-minute, online Heart Risk Assessment. It will calculate your heart health and offer advice on how to maintain or improve it. Visit [BarstowHeart.com](http://BarstowHeart.com) to take the assessment.

*Dr. Ashtiani is an independent member of the medical staff at Barstow Community Hospital.*



The benefits of quitting smoking apply to more than just you — your family members, friends and even pets can reap the rewards, too.

# QUIT

## *For the Greater Good*

Whether you smoke, vape, dip or chew — whether you've been doing it for 12 months or 12 years — you already know smoking or using other tobacco products is bad for your health. The warnings are printed on every package you buy.

That's why the huge increases in youth e-cigarette usage is so alarming. Over 5 million youth, grades 6 through 12, reported regularly vaping, and 1 million reported doing it daily, according to a survey by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Unfortunately for many people, knowing that tobacco is bad for them isn't a good enough reason to quit. Nicotine is a highly addictive drug, but its misuse won't land users in jail. This means it might be hard for users to hit "rock bottom" before they get sick.

Yet, if you keep using tobacco or vaping nicotine, it is extremely likely that you will get sick. And if you smoke indoors, anyone who lives with you might get sick too, including your kids and pets. You should also know:

- Smoking is still the top cause of preventable death and disease in the United States, according to the CDC.
- Over 480,000 people die from smoking-related causes every year.
- Smoking doesn't just cause lung cancer. The CDC finds it can also cause cancer of the bladder, cervix, colon, esophagus, kidney, mouth, liver, pancreas and stomach.
- Smoking can also cause or contribute to diabetes, emphysema, heart disease, osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis and stroke.
- Tobacco use can make it harder to get pregnant. It can also make it more likely for

a baby to have certain birth defects or to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

- Men who smoke are more likely to have erectile dysfunction.
- According to the CDC, 2.5 million nonsmokers have died from exposure to secondhand smoke since 1964.
- In small children, secondhand smoke is often a contributing factor to ear infections and asthma.
- Secondhand smoke can cause nose or lung cancer in your pets.

### **READY TO QUIT YET?**

Even if you are trying to quit — and/or have tried time and time again to quit — habits are hard to break, especially when they are wrapped up with an addictive substance like nicotine. That's why finding the support you need to quit once and for all is important.



## RESOURCES TO QUIT SMOKING

- The American Lung Association's Freedom From Smoking program has been around for decades and helped over 1 million people quit tobacco use. Classes and support groups are available online and across the country, along with a telephone hotline.
- The National Cancer Institute has two free smartphone apps, QuitGuide and quitSTART, that can help you assess your tobacco use habits and provide needed distractions to counter cravings.
- There are numerous other apps, some free and some paid, that can help you track how much or how little you are smoking, if you aren't quitting cold turkey. Some apps even tally up the amount of money you're saving with every tobacco product you don't use.
- Your state health department has trained counselors available. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

### HELP FOR TOBACCO CESSATION

If quitting cold turkey has not worked for you, limiting your tobacco use with nicotine gum or patches to help you taper off may help. A physician can also prescribe a nicotine nasal spray, an inhaler or other medication. However, it is important to discuss possible side effects of any medications.

The FDA does not recommend using e-cigarettes as a way to taper tobacco use. Vaping can actually increase your nicotine intake, which can, in turn, strengthen your addiction.

Support groups or therapy, whether online or in person, can often provide the needed encouragement to overcome the frustration of quitting.

If none of these methods have helped you, the good news is that there are almost as many different methods and motivations to quit nicotine for good as there are brands

of cigarettes. Some other things you can try include:

- **Exercise.** If you're a heavy smoker, it might not be easy to start, but doing something physical, even simply taking a walk, is a great way to keep your mind off your cravings. Plus, the more your cardiovascular health improves, the less you are going to want to make it worse again.
- **Identify your triggers and avoid or replace them.** If you always smoke while drinking, cut back on alcohol until you quit. If you always take a cigarette break in the middle of the afternoon, find something else to do during that time, like having coffee or a healthy snack. Basically, create new habits to replace the old one.
- **Take it easy on yourself.** If you slip up and smoke again, it's OK. Don't beat yourself up, and don't tell yourself that you've failed. You

haven't failed. Tomorrow is a new day where you can start again, cigarette or vape-free.

- **Treat yourself.** With all the money you'd save by not smoking, reward yourself with something like a book or a dinner out when you hit sobriety milestones.

It takes time to get used to your new life, but eventually you can get there. Quit now, and your body will thank you later.



Concerned about your risk for lung cancer? Speak with a local pulmonologist. To find one, visit [BarstowHospital.com](http://BarstowHospital.com) or call 1-866-456-5270.





# YOUR LUNGS' *Best Life*

You probably know that not smoking is the most important thing you can do for your lungs. What other steps can you take to promote respiratory health?

Your lung function naturally declines with age, so it's important to avoid behaviors, such as smoking, that can speed that process. You can do more for your lungs, however, than steer clear of things that are bad for them — you can also take action to aid their function and slow age-related damage. Here's what you can do:

- **Build up your upper body.** Mix upper-body weight training into your exercise regimen, which can help you breathe deeper.
- **Check your local air quality and adjust your plans accordingly.** Over time, airborne pollutants from motor vehicles, factories, wildfires and other sources can damage your lungs, so be sure to stay indoors as much as possible on poor air quality days. Check the status of the air in your area at [AirNow.gov](https://airnow.gov).
- **Get a flu shot every year.** The flu can cause pneumonia, which can damage the lungs. Ask your primary care provider if you should get vaccinated for pneumonia, which the Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention (CDC) recommends for smokers, adults ages 65 or older, and people ages 2 to 64 who have certain medical conditions.

- **Steer clear of secondhand smoke.** Exposure to secondhand smoke can increase your risk of heart attack and stroke, according to the CDC.
- **Work up a sweat.** Regular aerobic exercise can boost your oxygen intake.



Ready to quit? Join the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout Nov. 19, 2020. For available tools, call 1-800-227-2345.

## A GREAT TIME TO KICK THE HABIT



Anurag Sahai, M.D.

According to Anurag Sahai, M.D., Pulmonologist and independent member of the medical staff at Barstow Community Hospital, if you smoke or vape, COVID-19 is yet another reason to quit. Physicians and researchers have learned that COVID-19 can affect a variety of organs and systems, however, Dr. Sahai says first and foremost, it is a respiratory illness that targets the lungs.

Tobacco smoke impairs the lungs, presenting an easier target for COVID-19, and affects the body's ability to combat the disease, the World Health Organization reports. Smokers are more than twice as likely to develop severe symptoms from COVID-19, according to a recent study in *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

Smoke from cigarettes and e-cigarettes can lead to chronic inflammation in the airways, which can set the stage for severe complications from COVID-19, according to the American Lung Association. The organization also reports that tobacco smoke damages cells in the immune system and airways that are key to the body's defense against respiratory viruses.

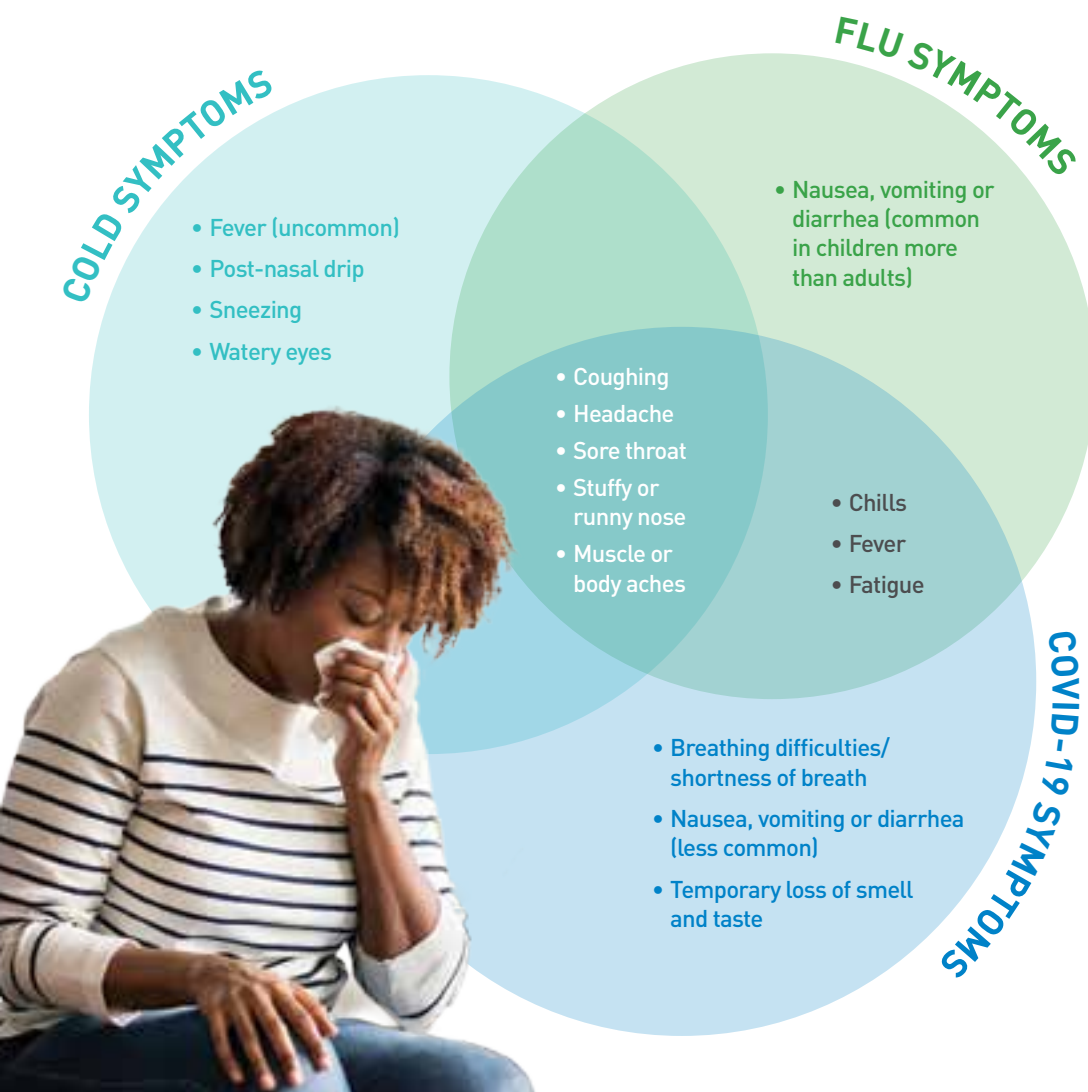


Some of smoking's most serious complications, such as heart disease and diabetes, increase the risk of severe illness from COVID-19, according to the World Health Organization.

# COLD vs. FLU vs. COVID-19

Staying home when you are sick is more important than ever. Recognize cold, flu and COVID-19 symptoms so you can take the appropriate action.

## COLD VS. FLU VS. COVID-19 SYMPTOMS\*



## HOW MANY DAYS AFTER EXPOSURE DO SYMPTOMS START?

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
Cold: 2–3 days						
Flu: 1–4 days						
COVID-19: 2–14 days						

## WHEN AM I CONTAGIOUS?

**COLD:**  
From 1–7 days after symptoms

**FLU:**  
From 1 day before to 7 days after symptoms; most contagious 3–4 days after

**COVID-19:**  
From three days before, to two weeks after symptoms; **most contagious 48 hours before symptoms, according to emerging research**

Barstow Community Hospital offers outpatient COVID-19 testing, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Outpatient testing requires a physician's order and results take 48 to 72 hours. Please bring a photo ID and insurance card with you.

## HOW CAN I PREVENT GETTING OR SPREADING UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS?

- Avoid close contact with others, keeping at least six feet away from people.
- Cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue or your arm, dispose of tissues and wash hands immediately after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- Frequently disinfect surfaces, such as tables, doorknobs or your phone.
- Keep away from others who are sick.
- Stay home if you are sick or have been in contact with someone who is sick.
- Try to not touch your face, mouth, nose and eyes with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Wear a cloth face covering over your nose and mouth in public.

## Fact:

Staying isolated from other people when you have an upper respiratory infection is essential to prevent spreading the disease.

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