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losers, *et al.* Why is it then that millions of people across the globe have no qualms about lighting up a cigarette and going through (sometimes) several packs a day? According to aesthetic dentist Dr Shantariu Jaradi, smoking kills 900,000 people every year in India. "It is common knowledge that cigarette smoking is the single major cause of cancer and cardiovascular diseases, contributing to hundreds of thousands of premature deaths each year, yet so many people continue to smoke and chew tobacco. Nicotine found in tobacco products is widely considered to be a powerfully addictive drug. Its rapid absorption through the lungs of cigarette smokers is widely-accepted, but its equally ready absorption through the oral mucosa under alkaline conditions normally found in cigar, pipe and smokeless tobacco use is less publicised," he says. Once in the blood stream, of

course, nicotine acts on the central nervous and cardiovascular systems in identical fashion regardless of the method of absorption.

Oncologist Dr Ian DSouza says that tobacco contains over 4,000 harmful, toxic substances. "Tobacco has been implicated in the etiology of a number of cancers — lung, cheek, tongue, oesophagus, larynx, stomach, uterine cervix, urinary bladder, and some forms of leukemia. Smoking increases coronary atherosclerosis, coronary artery spasms, cholesterol levels and reduces oxygen carrying capacity and acts in a number of ways on the respiratory passages that leads to bronchitis. Smokers are more prone to chest infections and pneumonia. There is also a definite association between smoking and low birth weight babies and an increased incidence of prematurity, spontaneous abortions, still births and neonatal deaths," he says.

Interventional Cardiologist Dr Rahul Gupta says that tobacco has multitude effects on the body. Cigarette smoke contains thousands of chemicals, some of the most harmful being nicotine, tar and carbon monoxide.

When a smoker inhales cigarette smoke, these chemicals enter the bloodstream and reach the brain in less than ten seconds. It takes only about 20 seconds for nicotine to reach every part of a smoker's body. At this speed, the effects of tobacco are felt almost instantly. "Nicotine has powerful effects on

the arteries. It is a stimulant, which means it raises blood pressure and makes it harder for your heart to pump blood through your constricted arteries. Nicotine also causes your body to release its stores of fat and bad cholesterol into the blood stream. This explains why it has been associated with higher incidents of heart attack and stroke. It slows your blood flow, cutting off oxygen to your feet and hands. Changing to low-tar cigarettes doesn't help because smokers usually take deeper puffs and hold the smoke in for longer, dragging the tar

- ◆ You need to be mentally prepared to give up. Remember the mind is stronger than the body. Ask yourself why you want to stop smoking. Remove all things related to tobacco, from your home.
- ◆ Tell your friends and relatives that you want to give up the habit and make them encourage you.
- ◆ Whenever you have a desire to use *gutkha* or to smoke, take about 15 to 20 deep breaths.
- ◆ Take two to three glasses of water after every meal. Consume at least 12 glasses of water every day to overcome the habit.
- ◆ Bathing in warm water after some exercise will give you relief. Talk to the people who do not smoke or have given up smoking.
- ◆ Add up the money you have saved by giving up smoking.
- ◆ When you have a strong urge to use tobacco in any form, chew aniseeds (*saunph*), clove (*laung*) or dry *aml*.
- ◆ Yoga and meditation helps. Regular yoga helps in various ways to give up tobacco. It increases will-power and tolerance.