

UNDER WIRE

Contents

[BODYWORKS]

[Fitness Dispatch](#)

[Fitness Q & A](#)

[Body Eclectic](#)

[IT'S PERSONAL]

[Ask Me Anything](#)

[Miss Manners](#)

[Etiquette](#)

[Dilemma](#)

[Doc Is In](#)

[Love & Marriage](#)

[Diary of a](#)

[Divorce](#)

[SOCIAL STUDIES]

[In Brief](#)

[HighWire](#)

[First Person](#)

[In Profile](#)

[Pop Quiz](#)

[REAL LIFE RESOURCES]

[Consumer Savvy](#)

[It's Your Money](#)

[Lucille's Garage](#)

[Related](#)

[Readings](#)

[COMMUNITY]

[Novel Idea](#)

[Real-Time Chat](#)

[Bulletin Boards](#)

[UNDER INFO]

[About UnderWire](#)

[Questions](#)

[Staff & Credits](#)

[WEB LINKS]

[ARCHIVES]

[Cover](#)

[WOMEN'S CHANNEL]

GetSMART

fitness dispatch

Smoking for Weight Control
by Sheila King



At a recent gathering of magazine models, media celebrities and health and fitness professionals, I was shocked by the number of "healthy" young women lighting up after dinner. I asked a colleague if she was having the same reaction. "No, I'm not surprised," she said. "More and more young women tell me they smoke to keep their weight under control."

Unfortunately, the statistics back up her perception. For the first time in history, women make up half of all smokers in the United States, with researchers predicting that we will soon make up the majority. Not exactly the equality we are looking for!

Between 1990 and 1995, smoking declined by 30 percent among white women and 36 percent among African American women. (That still means that an estimated 23 percent of women in the United States over 18 currently smoke cigarettes.) But the problem these statistics don't reveal is the popularity of smoking among girls under 18. The number of females who begin smoking during high school and college has risen steadily, while the number of males has declined.

Nicotine addiction is a powerful drug addiction, and it can have devastating lifelong health consequences. Here are some of the facts:

- Smoking kills more women than alcohol, illicit drugs, car accidents, suicides and homicides combined.
- Tobacco use has been cited as the chief avoidable cause of illness and death in our society. It is said to be responsible for more than 400,000 deaths in the United States each year.
- Smoking increases the risk of heart attack by 300 percent, even among women who have not yet reached menopause.

[back to the top](#)

- The incidence of lung cancer has increased by more than 400 percent among women in the past 30 years, and it is now the biggest cancer killer of women.
- Female smokers suffer from bronchitis and emphysema three times as often as female nonsmokers.
- Babies born to smoking mothers generally are smaller and weigh less than babies born to nonsmoking women.
- Cigarette smokers tend to be less physically active and have lower levels of fitness than nonsmokers.
- The cost of medical care attributable to smoking has been estimated at \$50 billion, and the cost of lost productivity and forfeited earnings due to smoking-related disabilities is estimated at \$47 billion per year.

[back to the top](#)

It's time to get the message out: Smoking is a lousy method of weight control! Programs aimed at preventing smoking and helping people quit must take into account the fact that concern over one's figure is a prevalent motivation for smoking. Such programs must discuss alternative forms of weight control such as exercise and dietary modification. It's not enough to "just say no." We need to provide adolescents and young adults with the knowledge and skills they need to achieve and maintain healthy lifestyle habits.

Addressing issues of body image and self-esteem is of critical importance. The emphasis society places on "slim body at any health cost" needs to be overturned if we are to make progress. We need to give young women the confidence to realize that fit, healthy bodies, regardless of their shape, are the icons of the future.

[Sheila King](#) is an exercise physiologist at UCLA with more than 15 years of experience. She is a certified Program Director of the American College of Sports Medicine, and a trainer of personal trainers at UCLA Extension.

questions & answers

Dear Sheila,

I wonder if you can suggest a fitness activity for me. I work late each day until 6:30 or 7:00 p.m. It is dark when I get home, and I don't trust my streets. I am not a morning person, and get out of bed as late as possible. I do not have a lunch hour, but more like a lunch 20-minutes. Can you suggest an

[back to the top](#)