

Tobacco

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later reported in 2006 that African-American women are more susceptible than any other group to the health risks attributed to smoking.

John Wills, a family physician for 11 years, describes those risks.

"Tobacco smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer, primary respiratory illnesses, increased risk of hypertension, and of cardiovascular diseases," Wills said.

Hypertension is the medical term for high blood pressure. Every puff of nicotine, the dominant toxin in tobacco, temporarily increases blood pressure and heart rate, according to the American Cancer Association.

For steady smokers, blood pressure is continuously elevated, leading to blood pressure above the normal levels.

Additionally, heavy smoking can cause permanent damage to the lining of the lungs called the pleura. Wills explained that the pleura prevents the accumulation of mucus in the lungs.

"It's like the hairs in your nostrils that collect dirt that you breathe. Well, your lungs are the same, and smoking destroys that lining," Wills said. "If you have a lot of mucus in your lungs but don't have the pleura to help you cough that stuff up, then you get an infection, like bronchitis or pneumonia."

There is also the possibility of heart attack and stroke.

Smoking causes the blood vessel, arteries and veins in the body to get thicker and harder according to Wills. The longer a person smokes, the harder their vessels become.

"If they [blood vessels, arteries and veins] don't have the elasticity and can't stretch, then blood doesn't circulate," he said.

He added that the lack of circulation causes plaque build up, which can lead to a heart attack.

Many people find it very difficult to stop smoking.

Tonpea has been a regular smoker since her senior year of high school in 2002. Now an adult and ready to live alone in an apartment, smoking is a part of her lifestyle.

"I don't necessarily want to stop, because, if I don't stop, then there [will] always be something in my purse or my car that I can fall back on in case something ridiculous happens," Tonpea told.

Statistics show Tonpea's lifestyle is like a Russian roulette.

—According to the most recent in-depth "Surgeon General's Report on Women and Smoking," lung cancer incidence rates among women younger than age 65 years were higher among Blacks than among Whites and was predicted to increase.

The study, released 2001 by then-Surgeon General Tommy G. Thompson, reports that between the years, 1989 and 1996, the five-year lung cancer survival rates for Black women and White women were 13.5 percent and 16.6 percent survival for White women, 3 percent higher for Whites.

—African-American women are 60 percent more likely to die of coronary heart disease than White women.

—According to the surgeon general's report, the death rate for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (bronchitis and emphysema) was 44 percent among White women and 78 percent nearly twice the rate — among African-American women.

—Smoking exacerbates conditions that lead to heart disease and stroke; however, some Black women may also die because they do not receive appropriate medical care, states a 2000 report from the *New England Journal of Medicine*, as attributed by the Agency for Healthcare Research at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

"Most of the 1 million U.S. patients who suffer a heart attack each year are candidates for reperfusion therapy, either thrombolytic (clot-busting) drugs or primary angioplasty," the agency attributes to the Journal.

"In a study of nearly 27,000 Medicare beneficiaries who met the strict criteria for reperfusion therapy between February 1994 and July 1995, only 44 percent of eligible Black women received the treatment, compared with 59 percent of White men, 50 percent of Black men, and 56 percent of White women."

—The surgeon general also suggested that Black women might have more difficulty quitting smoking.

—"Black women may be more sensitive than White women to the dependence-producing properties of nicotine. Researchers have hypothesized that Black women may smoke cigarettes with a higher nicotine content or inhale more deeply than do

White women," the report states.

But Tonpea's resistance to quitting may go against the majority. The CDC's 1993 National Health Interview Survey reported that 75 percent of African-American women who smoke would like to stop.

Virginia Ross, 66, was a smoker for 44 years and quit just last year.

"My husband kept asking me, 'Why don't you stop smoking? Why don't you stop smoking?' and so I just decided to stop," Ross said.

Quitting can be just as difficult as weaning an addict off heroin or cocaine. The surgeon general reported in a "You Can Quit Smoking" consumer guide that it usually takes two tries or more before a person successfully quits smoking.

Wills recommends three options for people trying to quit smoking:

—Stop smoking all together, what some call "cold

turkey."

—Try smoking cessation pills, which are only available through prescription.

—Buy over the counter medications, such as nicotine gum, nicotine patches or nicotine lozenges similar to Halls.

According to Ross, she tried twice, but when she had a successful quit, she gained weight.

There's a reason for the weight gain, says Wills.

"It happens because they reach for food instead of a cigarette. It's a lifestyle modification. Instead of reaching for a cigarette, you have to figure out what else you can do," he said.

Ross is approaching three years of being smoke-free. She offers advice for anyone trying to quit. "Bottom line, you have to be ready. It's a mind thing and it takes a strong commitment to stop."

Roshni L. Rountree writes for *Howard University News Service*.

Black women reps in Internet exhibit

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON - The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation is featuring the legislative accomplishments of African-American women in Congress on a new website, www.avoiceline.org.

As a virtual library, developed by the CBCF, A Voice is designed to chronicle the history, influence and policy accomplishments of the Congressional Black Caucus, founded in 1970.

The special exhibit, unveiled last month, continues to track the progress of African-American women in Congress since Rep. Shirley Chisholm (D-N.Y.), the first African-American woman to be elected to Congress, and the only woman among the

13 founders.

Only 24 African-American women have served in Congress, including Rep. Barbara Jordan (D-Texas), who participated in the Watergate hearings and Cardiss Collins (D-Ill.), the longest-serving Black congresswoman who held her seat for 23 years, the A Voice site points out.

The exhibit also features Carol Moseley-Braun's 1992 history-making election as the first African-American woman in the U.S. Senate.

The site includes exhibits on the role of CBC members in the Voting Rights Act, the Martin Luther King Jr. National Holiday Bill, the South Africa anti-apartheid movement and the CBC founding.

Your Horoscope Says... April 5-11

ARIES

Someone in the family is ready to give you something. Open yourself up to it. Home improvement — mental, physical and spiritual — is this week's best theme. Seek the simple pleasures from a neglected hobby this week.

Soul Affirmation: I love charming, positive head games.

Lucky Numbers: 18, 24, 36

TAURUS

How efficient you are this week! Your busy mind is focused on productivity and achievement. Both come easily to you, so take your advantage and press forward. Take time to thank those around you.

Soul Affirmation: I see myself as a finisher rather than a starter this week.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 12, 53

GEMINI

Entertainment and companionship are high on your list of things to enjoy this week. Use your mental gifts to speed carefully through your work so that you'll have more time for fun this week.

Soul Affirmation: This week, silence speaks loudest and truest.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 15, 31

CANCER

Your only real caution this week is to watch your budget. Other than that, happiness remains the focus, as relationships heat happily up. Your family is very supportive and loving right now; let them meet your new admirer.

Soul Affirmation: I speak my mind knowing that truth is my best defense this week.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 14, 33

LEO

Romantic daydreams may distract you from work this week; try to stay

focused, but also enjoy your mental trips to romantic, sunnier spaces. These images will inspire you to take action regarding a trip or get-together with your honey.

Soul Affirmation: I let my dreams take over my mind to provide enjoyment.

Lucky Numbers: 27, 32, 41

VIRGO

Partnerships continue to be featured this week. This week is especially favorable for a fresh start or a new beginning for you in love. Avoid distractions at work this week and you'll get much accomplished.

Soul Affirmation: There is a funny side to everything I see.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 17, 37

LIBRA

Friendship remains highlighted. You may be attending a social event with good friends, or you may be planning one. Whichever, it will be a very happy occasion. Be happy! You've got many loving friends.

Soul Affirmation: Hope is a beautiful jewel. I enjoy owning it.

Lucky Numbers: 22, 26, 31

SCORPIO

You may find out this week that the project you didn't really want to work on has been scrapped. That leaves you plenty of time to finish up the stuff you want to work on. Money concerns ease up. This week, a romantic get-together will remind you of what bliss really is.

Soul Affirmation: He who asks might seem foolish for a while.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 10, 17

SAGITTARIUS

Keep an eye on your budget this week, but also indulge your creative senses with the visual and the tactile. You might find yourself wanting to

"feel" something new in your hands. Just the feeling may be enough; you don't necessarily have to spend money to satisfy your artistic urge this week.

Soul Affirmation: Happiness is my only goal this week.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 15, 22

CAPRICORN

Call early in the week and make a date so you can catch the person who you want to spend time with this week. An old love may turn up in your romantic mix, and romance will be very sweet if you rise above the temptation to remember why you split in the first place.

Soul Affirmation: What I need to be is fully present inside of me.

Lucky Numbers: 21, 36, 43

AQUARIUS

Your vibes are calling to you this week to think fondly of all the love you are now giving and have given. Love itself makes you a better you. So, act the fool, and love with all your big sunny self. If things get stressful, repeat your magic word to yourself: LOVE!

Soul Affirmation: Freedom of mind is the greatest gift for me this week.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 15, 33

PISCES

If you want to keep your positive outlook intact, avoid gossip and those who just might want to cry the blues for no good reason. You'll be happiest this week if you keep busy and keep your opinions to yourself. However, good advice is available from an older female relative.

Soul Affirmation: I appear to others what I know myself to be.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 8, 10