SMOKING FACT SHEET

If your relative smokes cigarettes, cigars, or pipes alone in the home, there can be cause for worry. Smoking creates the potential for serious danger as lit cigarettes, pipes or cigars can be forgotten or dropped in the house. Cigarettes do not burn out; think of them as a lit match when you’re considering safety. Someone who is confused may also try dangerous ways to light a cigarette – for instance, if matches cannot be found, they may try using the stove to light their cigarette.

Now is a good time for you to decide how you feel about your relative’s smoking:

Do you want to help your relative quit?
Or

There are Steps You Can Take to Help Your Relative Stop Smoking

Would you feel comfortable knowing that your relative only smokes when another person is present?

Even though you may have wished for years that your relative would stop smoking, there are some simple methods that may help with smoking cessation:

Reduce your relative’s desire to smoke.

- Try a combination of smoking cessation techniques such as a nicotine patch, gum, or plastic replica of a cigarette as a method of occupying your relative’s hands and reducing the stress that may cause smoking.
- Talk to your relative’s doctor about prescribing some short-term medications for smoking cessation that could be used along with the nicotine gum, patches, or inhaler.
- Do not serve as much coffee or cola, or any other beverage that your relative normally drank while smoking; substitute fruit juices or non-carbonated beverages.
- Be aware of “trigger times” when your relative likes to smoke – for example, after dinner, or while talking on the phone – and have specific strategies to
change the situation. Suggest a walk after dinner or give your relative an item to hold (e.g., a pencil) while talking on the phone.

**Remove visual reminders about smoking**

- Remove any cigarettes, lighters, matches, and ashtrays from your relative’s environment that could be a reminder of the habit and need.
- Store smoking materials (cigarettes, lighters, etc.) in a secure location out of your relative’s sight. This will help create an “out of sight, out of mind” situation for the smoker that might decrease the craving.
- Remove all knobs from the stove when not in use and place them in a “safe” location where your relative cannot find them.
- Change cigarette brands as a way of reducing your relative’s pleasure in smoking.

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**What if Your Relative Continues Smoking while Someone is Present?**

Taking smoking away from your relative could be like removing an old friend. Maybe smoking is one of the few pleasures left for your relative, and while you do not wish to eliminate it, you want the activity to remain safe. Nicotine may act as a calming agent for your relative. Here are suggestions that might help you allow your relative to smoke safely:

**Create a “smoking schedule” for smoking breaks during the day.**

- Write down all the times your relative smokes for one week.
- Show the calendar to your relative and let your relative work with you in organizing a smoking schedule.
- Post the smoking schedule in a prominent place (e.g., on the refrigerator) and show it to your relative when the urge to smoke strikes.

**Limit smoking to a safe place in the home (kitchen, balcony).**

- Sit together while your relative smokes, and make it an enjoyable time for both of you.
- Clear away any clutter (newspaper, magazines, dried flowers) that is situated around the location where your relative smokes.
Provide a large, stable fireproof ashtray for your relative to use. Do not place the ashtray on the arm of a chair, or any other place that is unstable.

Confine smoking to an indoor location, as an outdoor location could be dangerous with flammable grasses, etc.

**Will neighbors, family or friends give tobacco products to your relative?**

- Inform family and friends about the new “rules for smoking” that are being used with your relative. Explain the importance of having someone present when your relative is smoking.
- Ask family and friends to support you in your caregiving and the new smoking etiquette that you have put in place.

**Things you should do if your relative smokes (alone or with another person present).**

- Make certain there is a working smoke detector and fire extinguisher available for your use and your relative’s use.
- Post emergency numbers and information in a prominent place for people who live in the home and emergency personnel.
- Secure the house in a way that still provides your relative with an exit he or she can use to get out in case of a fire or other emergency.