Press Release

Women smokers can lower their risk of heart disease by quitting the habit

Lifestyle changes and strong resolve to quit are key

New Delhi, 23 August 2017: As per WHO estimates, 3 million people in industrialized countries will have died due to tobacco use by 2030, and an additional 7 million people in developing countries will meet the same fate.

Smoking is still the leading preventable cause of death. Not only does tobacco smoke cause lung cancer, it is also implicated in heart disease, other cancers and respiratory diseases. As per the IMA, women who quit smoking have a 21% lower risk of dying from coronary heart disease within five years of quitting their last cigarette.

Women who are current smokers have almost triple their risk of overall death compared with non-smoker women. Current smokers also have a 63% percent increased risk for colon cancer compared with never-smokers, while former smokers have a 23% increased risk. The risks of dying from other conditions also decline after quitting, although the time frame varies depending on the disease.

Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, "It’s never too early to stop, and it’s never too late to stop. Women who started smoking earlier in life are at a higher risk for overall mortality, of dying from respiratory disease and from any smoking–related disease. However, a smoker’s overall risk of dying returns to the level of a never-smoker 20 years after quitting. Women metabolize nicotine more quickly than men and cigarette smoke appears to be more toxic for women. Women’s coronary arteries are typically smaller than men's. Smaller blood clots can block the vessels and trigger a heart attack.”

Most of the excess risk of dying from coronary heart disease vanishes within five years of quitting. For chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), the return to normal takes 20 years, although there is an 18% reduction in the risk of death is seen within 5 to 10 years after quitting. And the risk for lung cancer does not return to normal for 30 years after quitting, although there is a 21% reduction in risk within the first five years.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, “Nicotine replacement therapies may not be as effective in women as in men. This is because their menstrual cycle affects tobacco withdrawal symptoms and
the results of antismoking medications can be inconsistent. However, women should not wait until
the development of a heart disease to quit this habit. Making certain lifestyle changes along with
quitting smoking can help them lead a longer and healthier life.”

The following tips can help quit the smoking habit.

- Identify the trigger situation, which makes you smoke. Have a plan in place to avoid these or
  get through them alternatively.
- Chew on sugarless gum or hard candy, or munch raw carrots, celery, nuts or sunflower seeds
  instead of tobacco.
- Get physically active. Short bursts of physical activity such as running up and down the stairs
  a few times can make a tobacco craving go away.
- Eat a healthy diet rich in whole grains, fruits and vegetables.
- Keep yourself busy.

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About IMA:  Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization
of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well
as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through
more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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