Where There’s Smoke...

June 1, 1999 By Bob Lederer

Physicians tend to harangue their cigarette-smoking patients with HIV to “just quit,” citing the familiar long-term health risks. But this general warning can be underlined by some here-and-now hazards: Smokers with HIV are twice as likely as nonsmokers to get sick or die and, in particular, have much greater rates of bacterial pneumonia. And now, with some AIDS drugs inducing dangerously high cholesterol and triglyceride levels, there are reports of heart attacks in HAART-takers, some of them smokers. Of course, quitting is ideal, but tough to do. For those not ready, experts recommend *harm reduction*—cutting the amount and frequency of smoking. There are plenty of programs, patches, pills (like Zyban) and therapies (like acupuncture) out there, but the first step is obtaining the latest research so you can make an informed choice about which is best for you.

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