



# SMOKING



Tobacco smoking is the largest single most preventable cause of ill health and death in Australia. It is a major risk factor for coronary heart disease, stroke, peripheral vascular disease, cancer and a variety of other diseases and conditions. There are around 19,000 tobacco caused deaths each year. Over the last decade or so the bad health effects of smoking have been in the media a lot and the government has been spending a lot of money to try to reduce the number of smokers in Australia. While it is your choice if you want to smoke or not it's also good to know what some of the health effects are.

## WHY PEOPLE START

People start smoking for a variety of different reasons. Some think it looks cool. Others start because their family members or friends smoke. Statistics show that about 9 out of 10 tobacco user's start before they're 18 years old. Most adults who started smoking in their teens never expected to become addicted. That's why people say it's just so much easier to not start smoking at all.

## SECOND-HAND SMOKE

Smoking harms not just the smoker, but also family members, co-workers, and others who breathe the smoker's cigarette smoke. The 'side-stream' smoke that comes off a cigarette between puffs carries a higher **risk** than directly inhaled smoke.



# WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF SMOKING?

Tabaco smoke contains more than 4000 chemical compounds and at least 400 toxic substances, at least 250 are known to be harmful, including hydrogen cyanide, carbon monoxide, and ammonia. Among the 250 known harmful chemicals in tobacco smoke, at least 69 can cause cancer. As there is no safe 'low tar' cigarette and no safe level of smoking there are many health problems associated with smoking which include:

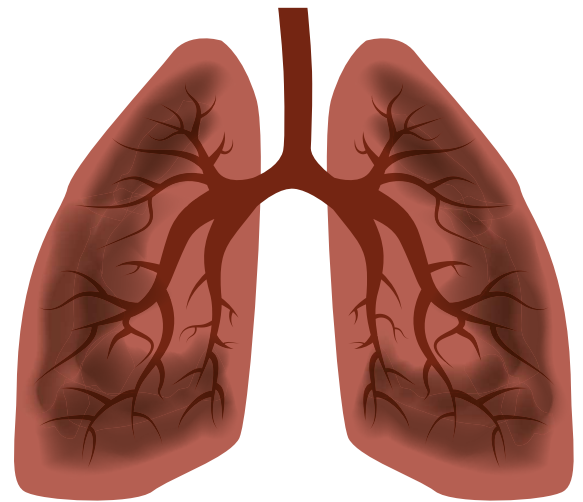
- Lung, mouth and throat cancer
- Heart attacks and strokes
- Gangrene and amputation of limbs
- Reduced male and female fertility
- Higher risk of blindness

These consequences of smoking may seem very far off, but long-term health problems aren't the only hazard of smoking. Nicotine and the other toxins in cigarettes, cigars, and pipes can affect a person's body quickly, which means that smokers experience many of these problems:

- Bad skin
- Bad breath
- Bad smelling clothes and hair
- Reduced athletic performance
- Greater risk of injury and slower healing time
- Increased risk of illness

## QUITTING

Research also shows that most smokers would like to quit. They are aware of the health problems that smoking causes - both for themselves and for the people around them. Smokers also realise they spend a lot of money on cigarettes. Some people are scared to quit. They are scared of gaining weight and come up with other excuses to not quit, or they put it off for that mystical day in the future when it will all be so much easier. While you might think that the whole world is telling you to stop smoking it is important for you to decide for yourself that you want to quit and be confident that you will succeed.



## BENEITS OF QUITTING

Every cigarette you don't smoke is doing you good. There are many health benefits to quitting, some of which you'll be able to notice hours or days.

The Health Benefits of Quitting	
After...	
20 minutes	...Blood pressure drops to near the level before you had your last cigarette.
8 hours	...Carbon monoxide level in the blood drops to normal.
24 hours	...Chance of heart attack decreases.
2 weeks to 3 months	...Circulation improves. Lung function increases up to 30%.
1 year	...Chance of heart attack is cut in half.
5 years	...Stroke risk is reduced to levels of a non-smoker's.
10 years	...Risk of dying from lung cancer is about half of a current smoker.



## INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

If you do smoke and want to quit, you have lots of information and support available. Different approaches to quitting work for different people. For some, quitting cold turkey is best. Others find that a slower approach is the way to go. Some people find that it helps to go to a support group especially for teens. These are sometimes sponsored by local hospitals or organisations like Quit SA. The Internet offers a number of good resources to help people quit smoking.

When quitting, it can be helpful to realise that the first few days are the hardest. So **don't give up**. Some people find they have a few relapses before they manage to quit for good.

Staying smoke free will give you a whole lot more of everything — more energy, better performance, better looks, more money in your pocket, and, in the long run, more life to live!

For more information on Smoking or Quit Smoking: [www.quitnow.gov.au](http://www.quitnow.gov.au) or [www.quitsmoking.com](http://www.quitsmoking.com)



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