

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SMOKING

Advice From Surgeon General's Reports on Smoking and Health

QUITTING WILL SAVE LIVES AND IMPROVE HEALTH

Smoking remains the leading preventable cause of death and disease in the United States. Recent studies show that smokers who talk to a clinician about how to quit dramatically increase their chances of quitting successfully. Quitting smoking is the most important step you can take to improve your health. Your doctor can help you quit.

TIPS FOR QUITTING

If you are a smoker who wants to quit:

- Set a quit date, ideally within two weeks.
- Remove tobacco products from your home, car, and workplace.
- Resolve not to smoke at all—not even one puff.
- Avoid drinking while you're quitting cigarettes. Drinking alcohol can trigger cravings for a cigarette.
- Anticipate challenges, such as nicotine withdrawal, particularly during the critical first few weeks.
- Ask others not to smoke around you. Allowing them to smoke around you can make it harder for you to quit.
- Identify reasons for quitting and benefits of quitting.

Medication and counseling help smokers quit:

- Physicians can recommend counseling or coaching in combination with over-the-counter nicotine patches, gum, or lozenges or with FDA-approved medications, unless there are other health concerns about those medications.
- Medication and counseling in combination result in much higher quit rates than medication alone.
- Counseling and coaching are available through community, employer, insurance, and hospital/medical practice cessation programs or through quitline services (1-800-QUIT-NOW).

**YOU
CAN QUIT
AND YOUR HEALTH
CARE PROVIDER
CAN HELP**

Resources to help smokers quit:

- Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669), the national access number to state-based quitline services.
- Go to www.smokefree.gov, www.cdc.gov/tips and www.ahrq.gov/path/tobacco.htm for free materials.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM SURGEON GENERAL'S REPORTS ON SMOKING AND HEALTH

1. There is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke. Any exposure to tobacco smoke—even an occasional cigarette or exposure to secondhand smoke—is harmful.
2. Damage from tobacco smoke is immediate. Tobacco smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals and chemical compounds that reach your lungs every time you inhale. Your blood then carries the poisons to all parts of your body. These poisons damage DNA, which can lead to cancer; damage blood vessels and cause clotting, which can cause heart attacks and strokes; and damage the lungs, which can cause asthma attacks, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis.
3. Smoking longer means more damage. Both the risk and the severity of many diseases caused by smoking are directly related to how long the smoker has smoked and the number of cigarettes smoked per day.
4. Cigarettes are designed for addiction. The design and contents of tobacco products make them more attractive and addictive than ever before. Nicotine addiction keeps people smoking even when they want to quit.
5. Even low levels of exposure, including exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke, are dangerous. You don't have to be a heavy smoker or a long-time smoker to get a smoking-related disease or have a heart attack or stroke triggered by smoke.
6. There is no safe cigarette.

HOW SMOKING HARMS YOUR HEALTH

HEART DISEASE

Smoking causes dangerous plaque buildup that can clog and narrow your arteries. Poisons from tobacco smoke also quickly damage blood vessels and make blood more likely to clot. This can block blood flow and lead to heart attack, stroke, or sudden death. Even exposure to secondhand smoke can trigger a heart attack or stroke in nonsmokers.



Quitting smoking will improve your heart health. After just one year, your risk for a heart attack drops sharply. Even if you've already had a heart attack, you cut your risk of having another one by a third to a half if you quit smoking. Two to five years after you quit, your risk for stroke falls to about the same as a nonsmoker's.

DIABETES

Smoking is a cause of type 2 diabetes. If you have diabetes and smoke, your risk for kidney disease is two to three times higher than if you don't smoke. Smokers with diabetes also have higher risk for heart disease; eye disease that can cause blindness; nerve damage that leads to numbness, pain, weakness, and poor circulation; and amputations. Smokers who have diabetes also have more difficulty recovering from surgery.



After you quit smoking, you will have better control over your blood sugar levels. When you quit, you will be less likely to have heart or kidney disease, blindness, or amputations.

CANCER

Tobacco smoke contains toxic chemicals that can damage your DNA and lead to cancer. One out of every three cancer deaths in this country is from smoking. Continuing to smoke weakens the cancer-fighting systems of your body. Smoking also can interfere with your cancer treatment. Cancer patients and survivors who continue to smoke are more likely to die from their original cancer, a secondary cancer, or other causes than are cancer patients and survivors who are former smokers or who have never smoked.



FERTILITY AND PREGNANCY

Smoking reduces a woman's chance of getting pregnant and damages DNA in sperm. Damage to sperm could decrease fertility and lead to miscarriage or birth defects. Men who smoke are more likely to have erectile dysfunction, which can affect reproduction. Women who smoke during pregnancy have a higher risk for ectopic pregnancy, delivering their babies early, and stillbirth. Those who smoke during early pregnancy are more likely to have babies born with a cleft lip or palate. Babies whose mothers smoke during pregnancy are more likely to have low birth weight or to die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Tobacco smoke also damages the tissues of the unborn baby's growing brain and lungs and could interfere with the growth of the placenta, the organ that feeds the baby in the womb. This could lead to miscarriage, premature delivery, or low birth weight.



Most people find a combination of resources works best. Many smokers do not quit on their first attempt. Many need several tries to successfully quit. But the benefits are well worth it. Keep trying.

RESOURCES FOR QUITTING

- Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW.
- www.smokefree.gov
- www.cdc.gov/tips



Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention
Office on Smoking
and Health