

Smoking

Every year about 19,000 Australians die of smoking related diseases. Smoking damages nearly every organ in the body and one in two lifetime smokers will die from their smoking. Quitting at any age gives immediate benefits and reduces the chance of developing smoking related illnesses. With planning and determination you can quit and stay a non-smoker.

Health effects of smoking

Tobacco smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, including nicotine, carbon monoxide, tar, ammonia and arsenic. Many of the chemicals are toxic and at least 69 are known to cause cancer. When tobacco smoke is inhaled, many chemicals pass through your lungs into your bloodstream and are carried around your body. It makes no difference whether you smoke 'light', 'mild' or regular cigarettes or another form of tobacco: you will inhale similar amounts of toxic chemicals.

- Nicotine is an addictive drug that can make quitting difficult – but not impossible.
- Carbon monoxide replaces some of the oxygen carried in your blood,

robbing your muscles, heart and brain of oxygen.

- Tar coats your lungs like soot in a chimney and causes cancer.

Some of the chemicals damage cilia, the tiny hairs that help clean your lungs and some destroy lung tissue.

The damage caused by smoking starts with the first cigarette and continues for as long as you smoke.

Smoking:

- Increases the risk of developing heart disease, stroke and blood vessel disease
- Damages your lungs, causing respiratory diseases such as emphysema, asthma and bronchitis

- Increases your risk not only of lung cancer but also many other types of cancer, including cancer of the mouth, throat, bladder, stomach and pancreas
- Reduces fertility in women and men. It can lead to erection problems (impotence) in men and miscarriage or complications in pregnancy and labour
- Weakens your immune system, making you more susceptible to infections (e.g., pneumonia).

Smoking can also cause or contribute to many other health problems (e.g., tooth and gum problems, blindness, osteoporosis). It can increase recovery time after surgery or illness and takes, on average, 10 years off your life.

Harm to others

Tobacco smoke in the air comes from both the burning end of a cigarette and from the smoke breathed out by a smoker. Smoke in the air is breathed in not only by the smoker, but also by non-smokers who live, work or socialise with the smoker.

This exposure to second-hand smoke can cause heart disease, lung cancer, breathing and other problems in non-smokers. Children exposed to second hand smoke are more likely to suffer from health problems including pneumonia, asthma, meningococcal disease, middle ear infections and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS or 'cot death').

Why stop smoking?

It's important to be clear about your reasons for smoking and for quitting. Good reasons to quit include:

- The condition of your heart, lungs, circulation and immune system will improve
- Your breathing will improve
- Food will smell and taste better
- You will find it easier to exercise and be active
- Your general health and resistance to infection will be better, so you are likely to have less sick days
- You will save money – about \$3,800 per year for a pack-a-day habit.

Before you quit

Before you quit, consult your doctor if you:

- Are taking any medicines, as chemicals in cigarette smoke change the way some medicines work
- Have suffered from depression, anxiety or other mental illness, as stopping smoking can be stressful.

Where to get help

Stopping smoking involves more than overcoming the physical addiction to nicotine. You will have the best chance of quitting and staying quit if you use an advice or support service and a proven quitting medicine. Quitting services and medicines include:

- Quitline phone 13 7848 (13 QUIT) – for the cost of a local call – offers a free Quit Pack, expert information and advice, courses, coaching and support
- The QuitCoach (www.quitcoach.org.au) – a free, interactive website
- Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) – to reduce nicotine cravings and withdrawal symptoms. It is most useful for people who smoke more than 10 cigarettes per day. People who use NRT are twice as likely to stay quit as those who try to use willpower alone. NRT is available, without a prescription, in the form of chewing gum, skin patches, inhalers, sublingual tablets or lozenges. Ask a pharmacist for advice
- Non-nicotine quitting medicine that can be prescribed by a doctor.

Quitting and staying quit

- Making and following a ‘quitting plan’ and setting a quit date can help you to quit.
- Know when and why you smoke. When you have quit, it may be helpful, at first, to avoid situations in which you are tempted to smoke. (e.g., being with others who are smoking, coffee breaks, drinking alcohol, stressful or frustrating situations).
- Remove things that remind you of smoking (e.g., cigarettes, lighters, ashtrays).
- Learn new ways to deal with stress and to relax.



For more information

The Quitline

Phone: 13 7848 (13 QUIT) for information and a free Quit Pack.

Quit websites:

www.quitnow.info.au
www.quitcoach.org.au
www.quitbecauseyoucan.org.au
www.quit.org.au
www.quitsa.org.au
www.quittas.org.au
www.actcancer.org
www.cancercouncil.com.au
www.cancerqld.org.au

Healthdirect Australia

Phone: 1800 022 222

Website: www.healthinsite.gov.au

Consumer Medicine Information (CMI)

Your pharmacist can advise on CMI leaflets.

National Prescribing Service (NPS) Medicines Information

Phone: 1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424)

Website: www.nps.org.au

The Poisons Information Centre

In case of poisoning phone 13 11 26 from anywhere in Australia.

Pharmacists are medicines experts. Ask a pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.

Related fact cards

- » *Exercise and the Heart*
- » *Nicotine Replacement Therapy*
- » *Oral Health*
- » *Relaxation Techniques*
- » *Staying a Non-smoker*
- » *Weight and Health*

Your Self Care Pharmacy: