



# Smoking Cessation

SMOKING RISKS & TIPS FOR BREAKING THE HABIT

## Smoking and your health

Smoking damages almost every organ of the body and affects a person's overall health. It is a prime cause of lung cancer but is also a known risk factor for cancer in many parts of the body, including:

- Bladder
- Blood
- Cervix
- Colon and rectum
- Oesophagus
- Kidney and ureter
- Larynx
- Liver
- Oropharynx
- Throat
- Tongue
- Pancreas
- Stomach
- Trachea, bronchus, and lung



### Did you know?

Tobacco kills around 6 million people each year, over 5 million deaths through direct tobacco use and 600 000 deaths through non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke

**Cigarette smoking damages almost every organ of the body, causes many diseases, and reduces the health of smokers in general.**

**On average, smokers will die 10 years earlier than non-smokers.** By quitting, smokers lower their risk for smoking-related diseases and can add years to their lives.

This month we take a closer look at the health risks from smoking, and look at some tips and tools you, or a loved one, can use to quit smoking for good.

### Heart disease

Smoking damages the heart in several ways. The carbon monoxide in tobacco smoke reduces the amount of oxygen in blood, and may contribute to the development of coronary heart disease and possible heart attacks.



Smoking also damages the lining of arteries, leading to a build-up of fatty material (atheroma) which narrows the artery and reduces blood flow to the heart, this can cause angina or a heart attack.

### Stroke

Smokers are more likely to have a stroke, than non-smokers. If a clot forms in an artery leading to the brain, it can then cause a blockage, cutting off the blood supply and causing a stroke.



### Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

Cigarette smoke damages the tissues of the lungs, leading to overproduction of mucus. Chronic bronchitis occurs when the airways in our lungs have become narrow and partly clogged with mucus.



People who suffer from chronic bronchitis cough more, experience breathlessness and are also more at risk of developing chest infections and pneumonia.

Tobacco smoke also damages the air sacs in the lungs. Over time this leads to progressive loss of lung function and a condition known as emphysema. As the disease progresses, breathing becomes a major effort and may require supplementary oxygen.

### Fertility levels and birth problems

Smoking can reduce fertility, and smoking during pregnancy can lead to miscarriage and illness in infancy.



## Why do smokers continue to smoke?

The health risks and associated consequences of smoking are well documented, yet there are over 1 billion smokers globally and every day approximately 15 billion cigarettes are sold. Knowing the reasons why you continue to smoke, can help you quit.

### Nicotine

The primary reason smokers continue to smoke is addiction. Cigarettes contain nicotine, a highly addictive substance found naturally in tobacco. It travels quickly to the brain when it is inhaled, causing a feeling of relaxation.

The relaxing effects from nicotine are temporary. When the body rids itself of nicotine, it experiences withdrawal and craves another cigarette. Creating a cycle of dependency.

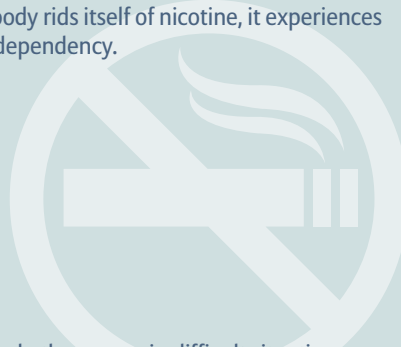
Nicotine withdrawal symptoms include:

- Cravings
- Anxiety
- Moodiness
- Irritability
- Inattentiveness

### Stress

Many smokers use cigarettes as a stress reliver and an aid to help them cope in difficult situations, however nicotine can actually increase stress and cause agitation. Nicotine cravings cause additional stress as your body experiences withdrawal.

It's important to look for healthy ways to handle stress and take care of yourself without smoking.



### Did you know?

Tobacco smoke contains around 7,000 chemicals. Many of these are poisonous and over 60 are known to be cancer causing (carcinogenic).

If you have questions about the effects of smoking or would like some advice on quitting, talk to your doctor.

## Benefits of quitting

It's never too late to quit smoking. The sooner you quit, the more you can reduce your chances of getting cancer and other diseases. Quitting while you're younger will reduce your health risks more, but quitting at any age can give back years of life that would be lost by continuing to smoke.

### Within 1 week of quitting

The carbon monoxide in your body decreases to lower levels and the amount of oxygen in your blood increases to normal levels  
Your ability to smell and taste will improve  
Your breath, hair, and clothes will smell better

### Within 1 month of quitting

Your blood circulation and heart function will improve  
Your lungs may also begin to clear, allowing you to breathe more easily  
Coughing caused by smoking will begin to decrease  
You'll be able to exercise and perform physical activities without feeling as winded  
Your teeth and fingernails will stop yellowing

### Within 1 year of quitting

Your risk for heart disease is lowered to half that of a smoker's  
Your heart attack risk drops dramatically

### Within 5 years of quitting

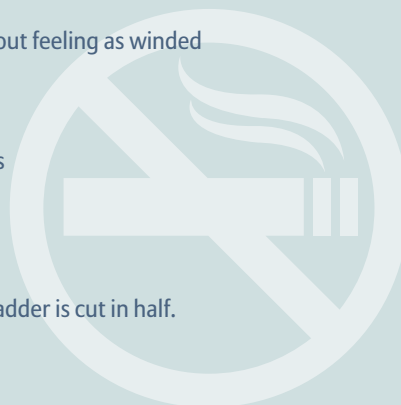
Your risk of having a stroke is significantly reduced  
Your risk of cancers of the mouth, throat, oesophagus, and bladder is cut in half.  
Cervical cancer risk falls to that of a non-smoker.

### Within 10 years of quitting

Your risk of dying from lung cancer will drop to half that of a smoker's  
Your risk of getting other types of cancer also decreases

### Within 15 years of quitting

Your risk for heart disease will be at the same level as that of a non-smoker  
Your risk of developing other conditions, such as arrhythmia, will be reduced to normal levels.



### Did you know?

Life expectancy for smokers is at least 10 years shorter than that of non-smokers. Quitting smoking before the age of 40 reduces the risk of dying from smoking-related disease by about 90%

# Smoking cessation tips

## Quit for a reason **01**

Often our personal motivations in deciding to quit cigarettes will be the single most important factor in not having another cigarette and becoming a non-smoker.

Everyone will have their own reasons for wanting to quit, it could be guilt at the thought of not being around for your family or simply wanting to look and feel younger.

Whatever your personal reasons, writing a list of the reasons you want to stop and referring to it every time you feel the urge to have a cigarette, is a great way to temper your craving.

## Bin the paraphernalia **02**

Get rid of ashtrays, lighters and any cigarettes you still have lying around. You don't want any reminders. Don't be tempted to keep some cigarettes 'just in case', it will only make giving in to temptation that bit easier.

## Speak to your doctor **03**

Your doctor will be able to advise on the various smoking cessation medications and therapies available to you.

These include nicotine replacement therapy which comes in the form of gums, sprays, patches, tablets, lozenges and inhalers.

Using medication such as bupropion and varenicline may also increase your chances of quitting.

Your doctor may also be able to advise on local support groups and smoking cessation clinics.

## Ask your friends and family for help **04**

Let your friends and family know you are quitting and seek their support. You will find that they can be a great source of encouragement when you feel tempted to smoke.

Consider asking a family member or work colleague who also smokes to try giving up along with you. You can support each other.

## Don't get hung up on weight gain **05**

Many smokers are reluctant to try and quit as they fear gaining weight as a result. Although some people may gain a few pounds in the effort to quit smoking, the resultant health benefits of being a non-smoker far outweigh the additional pounds.

Besides the new healthier you can shift those pounds in no time!

## Eat lots of Fruit and Veg **06**

Your appetite may increase while you are in the process of quitting cigarettes, keep healthy snacks or gum to hand and drink plenty of water. Snacking on healthy foods can be a useful way to curb cravings.

## Fill the void **07**

Smoking is as much a habit as an addiction. Be prepared for how you will fill the void or occupy yourself at those times of the day when you would normally light up. Maybe taking a walk after lunch or calling a friend during coffee break, whatever gets you through the next ten minutes without smoking. Remember that a craving will pass whether you indulge it or not.

Many people smoke to unwind. Think about how you will relax once you quit, taking up daily exercise is a great way to relax and make you feel positive about the new healthier you.

## Avoid the triggers **08**

Many people don't succeed in giving up because they don't take steps to avoid their smoking triggers during the initial stages of quitting.

Coffee, sugary foods and particularly alcohol are all smoking triggers. In the initial weeks of your journey to becoming a non-smoker, try to avoid alcohol and environments where alcohol is on offer.

Maybe make a plan with a friend for the forthcoming weekends where you go to the cinema, theatre or a sports game instead of the pub or club.

## Reward yourself **09**

Smoking is an expensive habit, as you quit, keep track of how much money you haven't spent and think about how you would like to spend it. Set yourself a target and reward yourself with a little retail therapy. There are apps that can help with this.

## Keep trying **10**

On average, people who eventually stop smoking have made three or four previous attempts. So, if you aren't successful this time, have a think about why your attempt to quit didn't work out and how you can succeed next time. Stay positive, learn from your previous attempt, set a date in the near future to work towards and try to quit again.



## Did you know?

Smoking is a risk factor for six of the eight leading causes of deaths worldwide



## Did you know?

Smoking affects the health of your teeth and gums and can cause tooth loss

**Remember: Many ex-smokers try stopping many times before they finally succeed. Don't let a slip get you down, keep trying to quit.**

## E-cigarettes

**E-cigarettes are battery-operated smoking devices which heat the liquid in cartridges filled with chemicals, and convert it into a vapor that's inhaled by the user.**

Although they do not produce tobacco smoke, e-cigarettes still contain nicotine and other potentially harmful chemicals.

While several studies have found that e-cigarettes produce lower levels of carcinogens when compared to smoke emitted by traditional cigarettes, very little is really known about the health risks of using them.

Due to the lack of scientific evidence on the health effects of using e-cigarettes, for now, they cannot be recommended as a safe and helpful way to quit smoking.



## Did you know?

The number of smokers is increasing in the developing world by 3.4 percent each year. Between 80,000 and 100,000 children worldwide start smoking every day, and fifty percent of them will continue to smoke for an average of 15 to 20 years.

## QUIT TODAY

Quitting smoking is hard. The path to becoming a non-smoker is different

for each individual and can be difficult, it requires perseverance, commitment and an abundance of will power. However, thousands of people successfully quit smoking every day.

If you are a smoker, right now is a great time to quit smoking. By tomorrow you'll already start to feel the benefits.



### YOUR INTERNATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE COVER

'Many people believe that living a sustainable lifestyle has to do with their actions on the outside – but it's just as much about what happens on the inside. Sure, it's great to recycle and to buy organic, outwardly, but it's just as important to ensure you are healthy on the inside.'

**Dr Ulrike Sucher, Medical Director, Allianz Worldwide Care.**

We have a helpline available to members 24/7 for information and advice on medical topics such as smoking cessation.

If you would like to speak with one of our experienced English speaking medical team, call our MediLine®, on **+44 (0) 208 416 3929**

Please note that MediLine® is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice or for the care that patients receive from their doctors.

Good luck, and remember the joy and sense of accomplishment from being a non-smoker far outweighs the momentary, transient relief of nicotine.

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