

Smoking: Benefits of Quitting

What are the benefits of quitting smoking?

When you quit smoking, your body starts to heal. It takes time to reverse many years' worth of smoking damage to your body, but some benefits start right away:

- You stop damaging your lungs. You may stop coughing.
- Your risk of heart disease starts to decrease as soon as you quit. By 1 year after you quit you will have decreased your risk of heart disease by one half.
- You lower your chances of cancer, strokes, and circulation problems.
- You improve the blood flow to your heart, brain, and other body organs.
- It's easier to fight colds and other respiratory infections.
- Your blood pressure may go down.
- You protect your family and friends from the dangers of secondhand smoke.
- Your blood circulation is likely to get better, so your hands and feet may feel warmer.
- Your senses of smell and taste will get better.
- Your teeth and fingers will lose their nicotine stain.
- Your hair, breath, clothes, home, and car will smell better.
- You will feel more in control of your life.
- You will have more energy to do things.
- You won't be spending money on tobacco products.
- You will be able to make it through a long airplane ride or a long movie without craving a cigarette.

What are the reasons people keep smoking?

"I have to die sometime, so I might as well enjoy life until then."

As a smoker you are much more likely to die from a stroke, cancer, or emphysema, which are not very pleasant ways to go. If you have a stroke, you may have trouble eating, walking, talking, and taking care of yourself. Emphysema and lung cancer make it hard to breathe, and you may need to carry an oxygen tank with you everywhere you go.

"I'm only hurting myself."

Non-smokers can be harmed by breathing in your smoke. Every time someone smokes, poisonous chemicals are released into the air. Each year, many nonsmokers die from lung cancer as a result of breathing secondhand smoke.

Babies born to mothers who smoke have an increased risk of premature delivery and low birth weight. Children who live with smokers get more ear infections and colds. Secondhand smoke makes children's asthma symptoms worse.

Also, think about the heartache and grief you may cause your loved ones by your early death or permanent disability. Be aware that you are setting an example for younger family members. Do you want your child to smoke?

"I know people who smoke and live to a ripe old age in perfect health."

True, but this is rare. Nearly all smokers have serious health problems, often starting in their 60s.

"Smoking is one of my pleasures. I don't want to quit."

One of the reasons smoking can be a pleasure is that you are an addict. Nicotine is an addictive drug that is found in tobacco. Like any drug addict, your body will crave a regular supply until you overcome the habit.

"I've tried and I just can't quit."

To successfully quit smoking, it helps to have reasons for quitting that are stronger than the urges to smoke. There are many positive benefits to being a nonsmoker, so think about what motivates you. Most former smokers make several attempts to quit before they finally succeed. So, never say, "I can't." You CAN learn to live without cigarettes in your daily life. You can quit and quit for good. Keep trying.

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