

Thinking about giving up

This booklet is written for people who are trying to make up their mind about giving up smoking.

A lot of people who smoke have done so for a long time, and like smoking. It's hard to stop. It can help to talk to your health worker, nurse, doctor, caseworker or the friendly people at the Quitline on 13 7848 (13 QUIT). If you have a mental health or physical problem and are taking any medication, make sure you speak to your doctor if you are thinking about giving up smoking.

Everyone has different reasons for why they smoke and it's the same for wanting to quit. You need to weigh it up for yourself. It might help you to think about the things you like and don't like about smoking. Then think about the good and not-so-good things about not smoking.



In the table below write down some of your own reasons, to help you decide.

	▶ Good things/things I like	▶ Not-so-good things/things I don't like
Keep smoking	Example: It relaxes me	Example: Costs a lot of money
Quit smoking	Example: More money	Example: It will be hard for a little while

Sometimes it can also help to ask yourself, ‘How important is it to me that I stop smoking?’

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is ‘not at all important’ and 10 is ‘extremely important’, circle the number that shows how important it is to YOU to quit smoking.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all important to me
that I stop smoking

Fairly important to me
that I stop smoking

Extremely important to
me that I stop smoking

If it is important for you to stop smoking, ask yourself, ‘How confident am I that I can stop smoking if I decide to?’

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is ‘not at all confident’ and 10 is ‘extremely confident’, circle the number that shows how confident you are that you can quit.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all confident that
I could stop smoking

Fairly confident that
I could stop smoking

I am very confident that
I could stop smoking

If you feel that making a change is really important to you, but you lack the confidence, think about who you could ask to help you. It could be a friend, a family member, a doctor, a caseworker, or someone else you trust.

Every cigarette you smoke is doing you damage

Smoking causes more death and illness than alcohol and all other drugs combined.

The immediate effects of smoking are bad breath, yellow teeth, yellow fingers, wrinkles, and smelly hair and clothes.

Not only does smoking affect your appearance, waste money that could be spent on other things and damage your fitness, it can also cause long-term illnesses such as heart disease, cancer and stroke.

When you smoke you inhale thousands of chemicals and poisons into your body. When these chemicals build up they can cause many diseases and make you sick, and the longer you smoke the more damage these chemicals and poisons are doing to your body.

Some of the diseases caused by smoking, such as heart disease, can start to affect smokers at any age, even in their 20s. These diseases can build up over a long period of time, reducing quality of life and causing much suffering.

In addition to the diseases above, smoking causes other problems:

Mental health

While for some people smoking provides an immediate sense of relief, it actually causes stress and can contribute to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression in the longer term.

Smoking also interferes with many medications that are taken for schizophrenia and depression: smokers may need more or less of these medications. It's important that a doctor monitors these types of medications when you stop smoking.

Financial stress

Smoking can be part of a cycle of hardship and financial stress. Being unemployed, without a stable home, or having too little money can cause enormous stress. Sometimes people use smoking as a way to cope with those difficult situations.

But when people spend a large proportion of their income on cigarettes, they have less money to pay for food, rent and other bills. This causes them more stress and they start to smoke more. The more you smoke, the more money you spend and the worse off you are, and so the cycle continues.

▶ **Heart disease**

Smoking clogs the blood vessels that take oxygen to the heart muscle. You are more than two times more likely to have a heart attack if you smoke.

▶ **Stroke**

Smoking can block the blood vessels in your brain, causing a stroke. Having a stroke means you might not be able to walk or move your arms and hands as you normally would. It can also cause brain damage, which can affect your ability to speak, eat and breathe.

▶ **Your lungs**

If you smoke you are more likely to damage your lungs (get bronchitis and emphysema), which makes breathing very hard and noisy. When people stop smoking they often cough more at first. This is good news. It means tar is being cleared from their lungs.

▶ **Circulation**

Smoking can block arteries in your legs. These blockages can slow blood flow to the legs and this can lead to sores not healing and even gangrene which can lead to the amputation of toes or legs.

▶ **Cancer**

Smoking causes 16 types of cancer including lung, mouth and throat, stomach, bladder, liver, kidney and pancreas. If you smoke, your risk of lung cancer is more than 254 times higher than that of people who do not smoke. Tobacco smoke has an estimated 4,000 poisons and chemicals, many of which are dangerous to your health. Poisonous chemicals found in cigarettes are also found in car exhausts, white ant poison, moth balls, car batteries and floor cleaner. These poisons get into most parts of your body and can cause cancer in nearly every organ of the body.

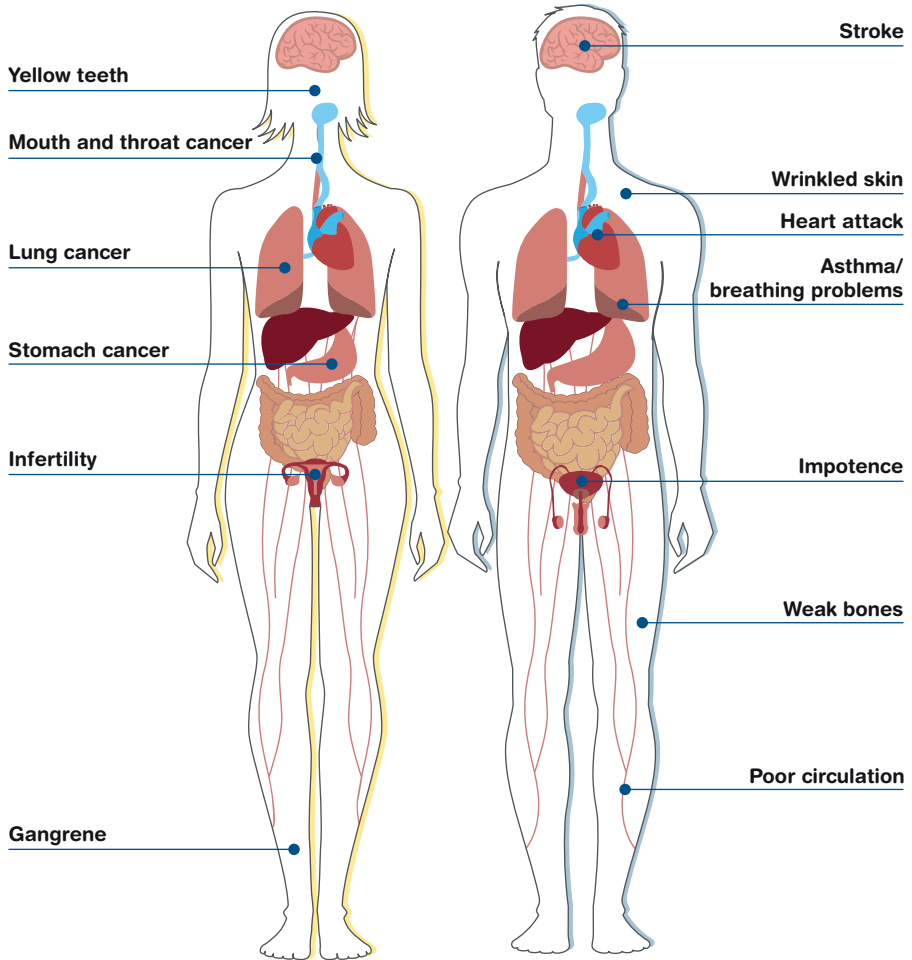
▶ **Pregnancy**

Smoking when you are pregnant means your baby smokes too. If you smoke while you are pregnant you are more likely to have a miscarriage. Your baby is more likely to be born early, (which means it will be underdeveloped), be sickly, and get more chest infections.

▶ **Sexual health**

Smoking affects the amount of blood going to the penis, so it is more difficult to get or maintain an erection (impotence). Smoking can also reduce the number and vitality of a man's sperm.

Some of the problems that smoking causes



This diagram shows some of the ways that smoking is bad for our bodies and our health.

Hard things about giving up smoking

■ “I’m good until my friends come round”

It’s hard not to smoke when people around you are smoking. Some friends will joke, offer you cigarettes, and say you won’t last. You may have to avoid these friends for a couple of weeks.

If you stick to it, friends will get used to you not smoking and respect you for your decision.

■ “I’ve tried to stop before and/or I’ll stop when I get older”

Most people try several times before they finally quit smoking. The more times you try to stop smoking the more likely you are to succeed!

Some people are lucky and stop the first time they try. Even if you don’t succeed, each time you try to stop smoking you will learn something new and it can help you the next time. If people around you think you haven’t got the willpower, show them you are serious and try again.

Smoking can affect you even in your 20s. Quitting is hard no matter what your age, and it gets harder the longer you smoke. Most people wish they had never started smoking.

■ “I want to stop but I get sick and moody”

This is due to nicotine withdrawal. Your body will take a few weeks to get used to not having nicotine any more. After that, you will start to feel better. It can help to think of withdrawal symptoms as ‘recovery symptoms’ rather than ‘withdrawal symptoms’. Nicotine patches, gum, lozenges, mouth spray and oral strips, inhalers, Bupropion (Zyban) or Varenicline (Champix) will help you to avoid withdrawal if used for at least eight weeks, or for the recommended period, until you have beaten the habit of smoking.

Talk to a health worker, nurse, doctor or caseworker about them. Talk to the friendly people at the Quitline and get some free advice from an expert for the cost of a local call from a landline on 13 7848 (13 QUIT).

■ **“I really don’t have the willpower”**

Willpower is not something we are born with or have 100% of the time. The important thing is to be clear about your reasons for stopping smoking and to have other supports in place for when you are not feeling strong. Remember, smoking is physically addictive.

■ **“I may put on weight if I stop smoking”**

Some people may gain weight when they quit. The amount of weight you might put on varies, but on average is no more than 4.7 kg. Using NRT, exercise and avoiding sugary snacks to deal with cravings/increases in appetite will help decrease the amount of weight you gain.

Good things about giving up smoking

■ **“A couple of weeks after giving up smoking I wasn’t thinking about it as much”**

At first, you may not be able to stop thinking about smoking. But it does get easier and you will feel like a new person. You won’t feel as if cigarettes control you.

■ **“I felt healthier almost straight away”**

As soon as you stop smoking your risk of cancer, stroke and heart disease starts to go down. Soon after quitting you will feel healthier, taste food better, breathe easier and have more energy. Remember, you may cough a bit more at first because your lungs are getting cleaner. If you are struggling with withdrawal symptoms, remember there are good medications (listed above) that can really help.

■ **“I feel in control”**

You don’t have to worry about running out of cigarettes, or being in places where you can’t smoke.

■ **“I smell better now”**

Many ex-smokers like the fact that their clothes and breath do not smell of smoke any more.

■ “I’ll have heaps more money”

The money you save adds up. If you smoke one pack of cigarettes a day, you could save \$175+ a week, \$700+ a month, or more than \$10,000+ a year. You could use this to buy clothes or pay bills or for going out.

People with less money have higher smoking rates than people who are better off financially. This could be because they grow up in communities where there are lots of smokers, more hassles and limited opportunities for education, employment or recreation. Because they have less to start with, low-income smokers spend a bigger proportion of their income on cigarettes than other smokers. This means they spend less money on food and other essential items. It also means those with less money experience more financial stress and greater health problems.



Quitting smoking is one of the greatest things you can do for your health and your wallet.

If you decide not to quit yet

That's OK. It's up to you to decide if and when you want to quit. But even if you don't want to quit right now, you can make sure that your smoking doesn't make others sick by:

▶ **Smoking outside whenever you can**

When other people breathe in the smoke from your cigarette it can harm their health.

▶ **Not smoking around babies, children or older people**

Babies, children and older people who are exposed to second-hand smoke are more likely to have inflammation of the airways, and are more susceptible to allergies and lung infections.

▶ **Making your home and car smoke free**

Smoke becomes concentrated in a confined space.

▶ **Supporting your family and friends when they are trying to give up**

You may not want to stop but your support for others could really help them quit.

▶ **Not smoking at all if you are pregnant**

Avoid smoking around women who are pregnant and do not smoke if you are pregnant yourself.

For more information, see your health worker, nurse, doctor or caseworker about quitting. The Quitline can help you with information, and you can ring them on 13 7848 (13 QUIT) for the cost of a local call.

Remember

- ▶ Everyone has different reasons for why they smoke and it's the same for wanting to quit. You need to weigh it up for yourself.
- ▶ Smoking causes more death and illness than alcohol and all other drugs combined.
- ▶ If you do give up smoking it may be hard for your body for a few weeks while your body adjusts to being nicotine free. Think of this as 'recovery' rather than 'withdrawal'.
- ▶ Quitting smoking is one of the greatest things you can do for your health and your wallet.

Acknowledgements:

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