

The harms of smoking

SMOKING IS INCREDIBLY HARMFUL.

Smoking kills more than 5 million people in the world each year. This number is expected to double to around 10 million per year within 20 years.

These numbers are so large they are difficult to take in.

Cigarettes kill around half of those who smoke long-term. Try tossing a coin once. The chance of it coming up tails is the same as your chance of dying early from smoking if you continue to smoke. Not very good odds are they?

On average, smoking takes 10 years off your life. Worse still, the number of years of living with disabling illnesses is larger for smokers than nonsmokers. You don't miss out on old age, smoking just brings on old age early. This means that the average smoker loses around 5 hours of their life every day they smoke.

Smoking is slowly poisoning you

Many people are surprised that smoking can cause so much illness and death. It makes sense when you think about it.

Smoking involves taking a range of poisons into your lungs many times each day, every day for many years. Our lungs are delicate. They are designed to breathe clean air and can't cope with lots of smoke, especially when it keeps on coming day after day. In our lungs the poisons are transferred to our blood. The blood then delivers the poisons to every part of our body.

Our bodies clean out many of these poisons, but some stay in the body and others do damage before they are removed.

The amount of damage caused by each individual cigarette is small. But multiply that by the number of cigarettes you smoke each day, and then by 365 for each year, and multiply again by the number of years you have smoked.

All that adds up to a lot of poison, and a lot of harm. At some point your body stops coping and you start to get ill.

DON'T IGNORE THE RISKS OF SMOKING.

SOME OF THE WAYS SMOKING KILLS OR DISABLES YOU

- Smoking causes nearly all lung cancer. Most lung cancer victims die within months of finding out they have cancer.
- Smoking also causes cancer of the mouth, throat, oesophagus, stomach, pancreas, kidneys, bladder, cervix, bone marrow and others.
- Smoking causes heart disease. Heart disease is the largest single killer in most developed countries.
- Smoking also causes stroke. If you do not die, your mind and body can be badly affected.
- Smoking affects the blood supply to your body. Poor blood supply causes cold feet and fingers and can result in the amputation of arms or legs.

- Smoking irritates the lungs leading to chronic bronchitis.
- Smoking destroys lung structure leading to emphysema (or lung rot). Emphysema makes every breath harder and can lead to needing an oxygen tank wherever you go. Almost all long-term smokers (more than 10 years) have early signs of emphysema.
- Smoking increases risk of getting other respiratory illnesses, including pneumonia.
- Smoking makes it harder to control asthma.
- Smoking can cause some forms of blindness.
- Smoking increases risk of developing peptic ulcers.
- Smoking reduces bone strength, increasing risk of fractures and slowing recovery from broken bones.
- Smoking increases a woman's risk of being infertile and a man's risk of being impotent.
- Smokers take longer to recover from most illnesses and surgery.

SOME OF THE WAYS SMOKING KILLS AND HURTS OTHER PEOPLE

- Passive smoking can cause lung cancer and heart disease in nonsmokers.
- Smoking by the mother, or around the mother, can cause a range of harms to unborn babies.
- Passive smoking can make asthma worse. It is impossible for people with some lung conditions to remain for long in a smoky place without getting sick.