

## CIGAR SMOKE IS TOXIC



**Front of Cigar Package  
(representation only)**



**Back of Cigar Package  
(representation only)**

Cigars consist of filler, binder and wrapper which are made of air-cured and fermented tobaccos. Tobacco smoke contains more than 4000 compounds. In addition to the many toxic agents that have been identified, at least 62 of these compounds are known to cause cancer in animals, including 10 known to cause cancer in humans.<sup>1,2</sup>

In addition to the curing process, tobacco leaves need to be fermented to become cigar tobacco. Cigars are different to cigarettes because of their long ageing process and because they contain this fermented tobacco. Fermentation is a controlled treatment where the leaves are packed in rooms with high temperatures and humidity for weeks, or even months, at a time. As a result, cigar smoke contains higher levels of ammonia (up to 20 times more than cigarette smoke), nitrogen oxides, hydrogen cyanide, carbon monoxide and cancer-causing compounds such as nitrosamines (around 80 to 90 times more than cigarette smoke). The tar produced by cigars is more carcinogenic than cigarette tar.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Cigar binders and wrappers are less porous than cigarette wrappers. The non-porous cigar wrapper results in less complete burning of cigar tobacco compared to cigarette tobacco. As a result, the concentrations of toxins are higher in cigar smoke than in cigarette smoke.<sup>2,4</sup>

Cigars are usually larger than cigarettes (they contain more tobacco) and take longer to smoke than cigarettes, thereby producing greater amounts of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS). This results in higher exposure for non-smokers to the many toxic compounds in the ETS from a cigar, compared to that from a cigarette.<sup>2,4</sup>

***Quitting smoking at any age has short and long term health benefits.*** Quitting will reduce the risks for diseases caused by smoking and will help to improve your health in general.<sup>5,6</sup>

Once you quit smoking, your body starts to recover in the following ways:

- 12 hours – almost all the nicotine has been metabolised.
- 24 hours – blood levels of carbon monoxide have dropped dramatically. This means that there is more haemoglobin in red blood cells available to carry oxygen to the body's cells.
- Five days – most nicotine by-products have been removed. Sense of taste and smell improve.
- Six weeks – risk of wound infection after surgery substantially reduced.
- Three months – cilia begin to recover, meaning your lungs regain the ability to clean themselves, and overall lung function improves.
- One year – risk of coronary heart disease is halved compared to continuing smokers.
- 10 years – risk of lung cancer is less than half that of a continuing smoker and continues to decline.
- 15 years – risk of coronary heart disease the same as a non-smoker.<sup>5,6</sup>

Decided to quit smoking? For help, talk to your doctor or pharmacist, call the Quitline on 131 848 or visit the Quitline web site at [www.quitnow.info.au](http://www.quitnow.info.au).

### **Sources**

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6. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Smoking: what it means to you*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, National Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2004. [http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/sgr/sgr\\_2004/consumerpiece/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/sgr/sgr_2004/consumerpiece/index.htm)