

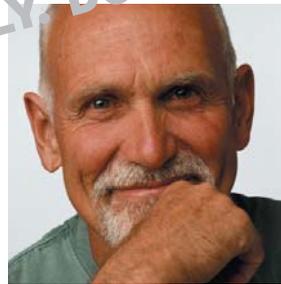


FOREVER
FREE[™]

A Guide
To Remaining
Smoke Free



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Your Health

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This is the fifth booklet in the Forever Free series. This booklet covers how smoking affects your health and how your health will get better now that you have stopped smoking. Many people quit smoking because they are worried about the health effects of smoking. For people who quit for other reasons (such as the cost), the health effects of quitting are a bonus.

Why This Booklet?

Why are we sending you a booklet about smoking and health? You most likely know that smoking is not healthy. Perhaps you even quit smoking for that reason. We know that showing pictures of black lungs does not help people to quit smoking. For this reason, most smoking cessation programs do not include scary stories about the health effects of smoking. So why *are* we sending you this booklet?

Because you asked for it. Ex-smokers like yourself have told us that they want more information about how quitting smoking improves their health. While this information may not help someone quit smoking, it may help you STAY QUIT. If you have started smoking again, this information will not hurt you. Perhaps it will make you want to try to quit again. (See page 11.)

How Harmful is Smoking?

Smoking is very dangerous! On the average, smoking takes about 8 years off of a person's life. We can break down that number even more.

- 10% of smokers die before age 55, compared to only 4% of non-smokers.
- 28% of smokers die before age 65, compared to 11% of non-smokers.
- 57% of smokers die before age 75, compared to 30% of non-smokers.

*Think about that last number. Most non-smokers live beyond age 75.
But most smokers are dead by then!*

These numbers do not tell us who will live and who will die. We know that about 30-50% of all smokers will die of a disease caused by smoking. If you see three people smoking cigarettes, chances are that at least one of them will die from smoking. You just cannot tell which one it will be. That person will lose, on the average, 24 years of life. **“One in three”** are very high odds. Your odds of dying in a traffic accident are only about 1 in 50. Your odds of being murdered are about 1 in 100. Most people think these odds are too high. So they wear safety belts while driving, and they lock their doors at night. But many of these same people are willing to risk 1 chance in 3 that they will be killed by smoking.

Smoking kills over 400,000 Americans every year. That's more people than are killed by alcohol, cocaine, heroin, murder, suicide, car accidents, fires, and AIDS...COMBINED! What if three jets crashed head-on, killing all on board. That would be a tragic event. But that's how many people die from smoking in this country... **every day.**

By quitting smoking, you have greatly reduced your chance of being one of those numbers!

What Makes Smoking So Harmful?

Cigarette smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals. You might be surprised at some of them. These chemicals include:

- cyanide (a deadly poison)
- arsenic (another poison)
- strychnine (yet another poison)
- formaldehyde (a chemical used to preserve dead tissue)
- methanol (wood alcohol)
- acetylene (the fuel used in torches)
- ammonia (what you might use to clean your toilet)
- acetone (the chemical in fingernail polish remover)



At least 43 of the chemicals in cigarette smoke are known to cause cancer. Another 401 are toxic or harmful. These chemicals are found in tobacco. Some are added by the cigarette companies as preservatives or to enhance flavor.

The most dangerous part of cigarette smoke is **carbon monoxide** (CO). This is a colorless, odorless gas. It is formed by the burning of substances. It is dangerous because it replaces oxygen in your blood. Your organs, such as your heart and your brain, need oxygen to live. When you smoke, CO prevents these organs from getting all the oxygen that they need.

At very high levels of CO, poisoning can occur. Some of the symptoms of CO poisoning include headache, flushing, yawning, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, and increased pulse rate. In severe cases, coma and death can follow. Carbon monoxide poisoning usually happens in rooms with furnaces that are improperly vented, or when a person breathes in a lot of exhaust fumes from a car.

Smoking rarely causes carbon monoxide poisoning, but the decrease in oxygen caused by smoking strains your heart. This increases your risk for heart disease. Now that you have stopped smoking, you may have found that you can take deeper breaths. You can exercise longer without getting tired! This is because you are no longer putting CO into your body. Your body is getting more oxygen instead.

Another chemical in cigarette smoke is **nicotine**. This is the drug that makes cigarettes addicting. It also increases your pulse rate and blood pressure. This means that your heart has to work harder and needs more oxygen. Over time, this stress on the heart may lead to heart disease. Smokers have at least twice the chance of having a heart attack as non-smokers. In fact, new research shows that smokers in their 30s and 40s are 5 times more likely to have heart attacks.

Remember that nicotine is a poison. A small drop of pure nicotine can be enough to kill a person. In fact, nicotine is used in insecticides to kill bugs. (However, nicotine in medications – gum, patch, lozenge, nasal spray, inhaler – can also help people quit smoking).

The rest of the chemicals in cigarette smoke are referred to as **tars**. Tars increase smokers' risk of getting many cancers. These include lung, oral (mouth, larynx, and esophagus), pancreatic, bladder cancer, stomach, and cervical cancer. Smoking accounts for 30% of all cancer deaths in the United States. This includes about 87% of all deaths from lung cancer.

Tars build up inside the lungs of a smoker. Tars prevent the lungs from cleaning themselves. This leads to diseases such as chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Smokers are also more likely to suffer from asthma and pneumonia.

What Happens When You Quit Smoking?

Enough of the bad news. Now for the good news. Quitting smoking is the most important health decision that most people can make. By quitting smoking, you have probably added years to your life. You have also increased the quality of your life. You can breathe easier, walk further, exercise more, taste food and smell better. You will feel and be healthier as a non-smoker than you would have been if you kept smoking.

The chart on the next page shows how your body recovers after your last cigarette. Your risks of bladder cancer, cervical cancer, cancer of the larynx, and peripheral artery disease are reduced by quitting smoking.

You can see that your health quickly starts to improve once you quit. You can also see that the earlier you quit, the greater the chance that you will overcome the risks caused by smoking. But quitting smoking improves your health at any age.

The chart is a very brief summary of how your health improves after quitting smoking. How long would it take to describe all the ways that quitting helps you? Here's a clue. In 1990, the United States Surgeon General published a report called "The Health Benefits of Smoking Cessation." That report was 928 pages long!

Let's take a look at what happens when you throw away your last cigarette¹.

20 minutes after your last cigarette

Most of the nicotine has left your brain. Your blood pressure and pulse rate goes back to normal.

8 hours after your last cigarette

The level of carbon monoxide in your blood has decreased to normal. The level of oxygen rises to normal.

24 hours after your last cigarette

Your risk of having a heart attack begins to go down.

2 days after quitting

You can taste and smell things better.

2 weeks after quitting

Your lungs are working better. You have better blood circulation.

1 month after quitting

You cough less and have less shortness of breath. You breathe better and are not as tired.

1 year after quitting

Your risk of heart disease has been cut in half.

5 years after quitting

Your risk of dying of lung cancer has been cut in half. Your risk of oral cancers has also been cut in half.

5-15 years after quitting

Your risk of stroke is about the same as someone who never smoked.

10 years after quitting

Your risk of lung cancer is nearly the same as someone who never smoked. Your risk of pancreatic cancer has also been reduced.

15 years after quitting

Your risk of heart disease is as low as if you never smoked.

¹Source: American Cancer Society; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Quitting Smoking Helps Others, Too

Quitting smoking has not only improved your health—it has also improved the health of the people around you. People who live or work around smokers take in all the same substances in tobacco smoke. They breathe in nicotine, carbon monoxide, tars, and the other chemicals. In fact, non-smokers who spend time around smokers may “smoke” one or two cigarettes per day. This places non-smokers at risk of the same diseases mentioned earlier. For example, it is estimated that 3,000 American non-smokers die each year of lung cancer caused by breathing second-hand smoke.

Second-hand smoke is very bad for babies and young children. Infants and children whose parents smoke are more likely to have asthma, chronic bronchitis, and allergy symptoms. They are also more likely to get pneumonia, middle ear infections, sore throats, and colds. Last, as babies, they are more likely to die of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).

Smoking is also harmful to unborn babies. When a pregnant woman smokes, her baby is also smoking. This leads to more miscarriages and other complications. Overall, smoking by pregnant women cause 115,000 miscarriages and the death of 5,600 babies per year in the United States. The children of mothers who smoke tend to weigh less at birth (which is a sign of trouble). They also have smaller heads and don't grow as fast as other children.

By quitting smoking you helped to improve the lives and health of your family, your friends, your co-workers, and others. Is there really any better gift that you could have given them? Probably not.



How Can This Information Help You Stay Quit?

Quitting smoking probably was the most important thing you could have done to improve your health. For most people, quitting smoking is more important than losing weight, exercising more, or lowering their cholesterol level. All of these would be healthy changes. But quitting smoking improves your health more than any of these other changes.

So give yourself a big pat on the back for making such an important and hard change. Smokers often tend to forget that quitting smoking is a “big deal.” Do not forget it. Be proud. Not only did quitting help *you*, but it also helped your children, your spouse or partner, and other people who spend time with you. You did well!

Sometimes ex-smokers forget the reasons why they quit smoking. Perhaps this booklet helped to remind you. The diseases caused by smoking are disabling, painful, and often deadly. By quitting, you greatly reduced the odds of getting these illnesses. You increased your life by many years. And you increased the quality of your life.

There may still be times when you have an urge to smoke. Some people find it helpful to remind themselves of the reasons they quit:

Henry quit smoking three months ago. Six months before he quit, he had visited his best friend, Jim, in the hospital. Jim and Henry, both in their mid-50's, used to spend their time together smoking. Now Jim was suffering from lung disease called Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). This breathing illness is much more common in smokers than non-smokers. When Henry saw Jim in the hospital, Jim was breathing with a machine that was put into his throat. Although Jim would live a few more months, he was never again able to breathe on his own, without the machine. Henry saw Jim on a stretcher as he was being moved to a nursing home, where he would spend his last months. Today, when Henry wants to smoke, he thinks about Jim breathing with the machine in his mouth. He reminds himself that this could have been him too if he had not quit smoking.

Other people remind themselves of the health benefits they have seen since quitting smoking:

It had been nearly a year since Victor quit smoking. He was starting to forget how hard it had been to quit. At times he would see his friends smoking together in a bar, and he would begin to wonder what it would be like to have a cigarette. However, yesterday the elevator in Victor's building was out of order. He had to walk up six flights of stairs to his apartment. As he opened the door, he found that he was not tired or winded, as he would have been before quitting smoking. This reminded Victor of how quitting improved his health every day.

Still other people like to think of how they helped others by quitting:

Whenever Gloria has an urge to smoke, she thinks of her beautiful four-year-old granddaughter, Maria. She used to feel guilty for smoking cigarettes when Maria visited. In fact, Maria would cough and her eyes would water if she was in Gloria's home for more than an hour. Who knows what the smoke was doing to Maria's little lungs? Maria was so happy when Gloria told her that "Grandma does not smoke anymore." When Gloria thinks about Maria, there is no way she is going to smoke again.

Once again, congratulations for quitting smoking! We hope that you are still having success at staying quit. If you have started smoking again, please read the box on the next page.

If You Are Smoking Again...

Here are some tips that may help:

- Go back and read Forever Free booklets 1 and 2, about the stages of quitting and how to cope with urges to smoke.
- Pick a new quit date in the near future. Stick to it. If you are not yet smoking as many cigarettes as before, the sooner you quit again, the easier it will be.
- If you are smoking more than a pack per day, talk to your doctor. Think about using the nicotine patch, gum or another product such as Zyban™.
- Make quitting smoking your number one goal.
- Remember, if you have quit before, you can quit again. Do not feel bad about it. You now know more than you did last time. Use that knowledge to quit again. Stay quit.



Notes:

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Enjoy
Good Health

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