



Smoking and cancer risk



The World Health Organisation describes smoking as ‘the single greatest cause of preventable disease in the developed world.’ Tobacco smoking is a leading cause of preventable death and illness in Australia. Smoking causes over 20,500 deaths in Australia each year. One in two lifetime smokers will die from smoking, and many of these deaths occur in middle age.

Tobacco smoke contains over 7000 chemicals, over 70 of which are known to cause cancer. Many of the chemicals in tobacco smoke cause serious damage to your health. You do not have to be a smoker to be affected by cigarette smoke. Exposing others to the dangerous chemicals that are found in tobacco smoke via second-hand smoke can cause serious health problems. There is no safe level of exposure to smoking and second-hand smoke.

Lung cancer

Lung cancer is the most common cause of cancer death in Queensland, for both men and women. Most lung cancer cases are caused by smoking.

Mouth and throat cancer

The organs associated with the respiratory system are all affected by tobacco smoke. Smoking is a major cause of oral cancer including tumours of the cheek, gum, tongue, lip and the floor and lining of the mouth.

Other cancers

Research also shows that smoking contributes to a range of other cancers including colon, stomach, pancreas, kidney, cervical, penis, bladder and leukaemia.

Other health effects of smoking

Smoking can also cause cardiovascular disease, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, Emphysema and Bronchitis

Smoking can also lead to:

- Premature ageing of the skin
- Periodontal disease, yellowing teeth, decay and reduced blood flow to gums

- Cataracts and macular degeneration (a common cause of blindness)
- Poor circulation, which increases the risk of gangrene and amputation.

There are many negative side effects from smoking specific to women. These include:

- Menstrual problems such as severe period pain and premenstrual tension
- Increased risk of giving birth to a baby of low birth weight.
- Increased risk of miscarriage, premature labour and birth complications
- Exposing an unborn child to the toxic chemicals found in cigarettes increases the risk of a baby dying from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Menopause with more severe symptoms
- Osteoporosis.

For men, the negative side effects of smoking include:

- Increased likelihood of sperm abnormality and lower sperm count in men
- Narrowing of blood vessels to the penis causing impotence.



Benefits of quitting smoking

Quitting smoking will greatly reduce your cancer risk, even if you have been a long-term smoker. Within 72 hours of quitting, benefits and improvements to your health have already begun. After 10 to 15 years, your risk of death from smoking-related causes will be close to that of someone who has never smoked. You will feel better about yourself and improve the health of family and friends around you.

Make the decision to quit

It is never too late to decide to quit smoking. The first step is deciding to quit.

Once you have decided to quit, you can use the tips below to help you quit. Remember, for some people, quitting takes practice. The best advice is to keep trying. Practice helps smokers plan what to do the next time they get an urge to smoke.



TIPS TO QUIT

1

SET A QUIT DATE so you can be mentally ready to become a non-smoker. Record your smoking behaviour in the few weeks leading up to quitting so you have a better understanding of how many cigarettes you smoke and what your triggers and habits are.

2

WRITE DOWN YOUR REASONS for quitting. Keep these in your wallet and refer to them when you have strong cravings.

3

STAY BUSY. Occupy yourself with a task when a craving strikes.

4

GET RID OF ANYTHING that might make you want to smoke. Throw away cigarettes, lighters and ashtrays in your home.

5

GET PLENTY OF SUPPORT. Ask your friends and family to support you and keep you on track. If you live or work with other people who smoke, ask them to quit with you.

6

GET HELP. You don't have to do it alone.

- **Contact Quitline 13 Quit** (13 78 48) 7am – 10pm, 7 days a week for support and encouragement to quit or visit quitnow.org.au. Quitline provides free information, practical assistance and support.
- **Discuss quitting smoking with a health professional** and plan your quitting strategy together.
- **Consider using pharmacotherapy** to assist you in your journey such as Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT), Bupropion Hcl or Varenicline.