

Myths About Cigarette Smoking

I only smoke mild cigarettes

Paula, aged 24

There is no safe cigarette and no safe level of consumption.¹ Some people try to make their smoking habit safer by smoking fewer cigarettes, but most find this hard to do. Some smokers think that switching from higher tar cigarettes to those with low-tar makes smoking safer, but this isn't true.²

A low-tar cigarette is just as harmful as other cigarettes. Also, smokers usually take deeper puffs, puff more frequently, or smoke the cigarettes to a shorter butt length.² Even if you do switch to low-tar cigarettes and don't make these changes, the health benefits are very small when compared to the benefits of quitting.²

I only smoke socially and can quit at anytime

Jenny, aged 21

Anyone who smokes is at a risk of becoming addicted to nicotine.² As you continue to smoke, your body learns to depend on nicotine and you can smoke more and more.³ Just three cigarettes a day can trigger potentially fatal heart disease and women are particularly at risk.⁴

It is never too early for cigarettes to cause damage, it can start with the first cigarette.⁸ Damage is occurring to the cells in your body every time you inhale chemicals from a cigarette.

I smoke rollies because they have less chemicals

Kate, aged 28

Roll-your-own tobacco contains the same poisons as manufactured cigarettes. While more research needs to be done on the dangers of smoking roll-your-own tobacco, it's a fallacy that rollies are less harmful than other cigarettes.¹

When I smoke in the car I leave the window down so I don't breathe in the smoke**Emma, aged 23**

Don't kid yourself – while opening the window might reduce your exposure to environmental tobacco smoke by a minimal amount, smoking is increasing your risk of developing emphysema, lung cancer, heart disease and many more fatal and disabling conditions.²

I'm young - I don't think about getting sick from smoking**Joanne, aged 23**

There are many short-term health effects of smoking. A major consequence is decreased lung function. This often leads to shortness of breath, constant cough and tiring easily during exercise. Smoking also diminishes the ability to smell and taste and causes premature ageing of skin.²

Often people don't realise that a smoking related disease could be developing for years before a diagnosis is made. A 'smokers cough' or shortness of breath are early signs of problems which can be fatal.⁶ The longer you smoke the greater your risk of developing a smoking related disease.¹

For women, cigarette smoking increases the risk of a number of sex-specific health problems.¹ Women who smoke can experience irregular periods and secondary amenorrhea, which is the absence of menstruation.¹ Smokers that are on the pill have a greater risk of heart attack, stroke and other cardiovascular disease.¹ What's more, stroke doesn't only affect elderly people. People in their 20s and 30s also die from strokes caused by smoking.⁷

I'm worried about putting on weight when I quit**Jocelyn, aged 29**

Many women put off quitting smoking for fear of putting on weight. Although gaining weight after quitting smoking is a concern for many women, it is important to remember that remaining a smoker is more of a health risk.⁹

You can avoid weight gain after quitting by introducing exercise and healthy eating habits into your daily lifestyle.⁹

I'll quit when I get pregnant or when I turn 30

Amanda, aged 19

Many young women regard their smoking as short term and don't believe they will develop the long term health effects of smoking.¹ Often there's a sense that you can just quit sometime in the future. However, your current smoking is doing you damage, and it won't be easier to quit at a later stage. The time to quit smoking is sooner rather than later.

In terms of pregnancy, women who smoke can experience difficulties during pregnancy and childbirth, including pregnancy complications, miscarriage and premature birth. There is greater risk of low birth weight infants, still birth and neonatal deaths, and sudden infant death syndrome. It is really important to quit smoking prior to pregnancy to reduce the risk for adverse reproductive outcomes.⁸

Women smokers are also at greater risk of sex specific cancers, with an increased risk of cervical and vulvar cancer.¹

Quit Tips

If you've decided to stop smoking:

- ***Call the Quitline and speak to a trained counsellor (131 848 local call cost). An interpreter can be arranged within 24 hours.***
- ***Talk to your doctor or pharmacist and plan a quitting strategy. This may include using Nicotine Replacement Therapy.***
- ***If your partner or friend smokes, encourage them to consider quitting too.***
- ***Make your car and home a smoke free zone***

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