



Benefits of quitting smoking

The best thing a smoker can do for their health is to quit smoking. There are health benefits of quitting for all smokers, regardless of age, sex or length of time that they have been smoking. People who have already developed smoking-related health problems, like heart disease, can still benefit from quitting.

For example, compared to continuing smokers, people who quit smoking after having a heart attack reduce their chances of having another heart attack by 50 per cent.¹

There are many benefits to quitting, some even occur within hours of stopping smoking. The changes that occur once you have quit show how your body can make an amazing recovery from smoking.¹

Time since quitting	Beneficial health changes that take place ²
Within 20 minutes	Your body begins a series of changes that continue for years. Your heart rate reduces.
12 hours	The carbon monoxide level in your blood reduces dramatically.
2-12 weeks	Your heart attack risk begins to reduce. Circulation improves. Exercise is easier. Lung function improves.
1-9 months	Coughing and shortness of breath decrease.
1 year	Your risk of coronary heart disease is halved compared to a continuing smoker.
5 years	Your risk of cancer of the mouth, throat and oesophagus decreases and your risk of stroke is dramatically reduced.
10 years	Your risk of lung cancer falls to about half that of a smoker and your risk of cancers of the bladder, kidney and pancreas also decreases.
15 years	Your risk of coronary heart disease and risk of death fall to about the same as someone who has never smoked.

Benefits for all ages

Are you under 35?

If you quit before age 35, then your life expectancy is similar to someone who has never smoked.

Are you under 50?

If you quit before age 50, then your risk of dying in the next 15 years is reduced by half when compared to people who continue to smoke.

For people of all ages

Best of all – quitting at any age doesn't just increase life expectancy – it also improves quality of life!

By quitting smoking you will reduce your chance of having:

- > cancer of the lungs, throat, mouth, lips, gums, kidneys and bladder
- > heart disease and hardening of the arteries
- > a stroke
- > emphysema and other lung diseases
- > gangrene and other circulation problems.

Appearance, vision and ageing

As an ex-smoker, you are also less likely to have:

- > macular degeneration
- > cataracts
- > brittle bones (that break easily)
- > wrinkles and look older faster
- > yellow teeth and bad breath.

Reproductive health

By quitting you will reduce your chances of:

- > impotence
- > having difficulty getting pregnant
- > having premature births, babies with low birth weights, and miscarriage.

Children's health

If you have children, your quitting can lower their risk of:

- > Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
– (cot death)
- > being smokers themselves
- > ear infections
- > allergies
- > asthma
- > bronchitis and other lung problems.

References

- 1 US Department Of Health And Human Services 1990, *Surgeon General Report: The Health Benefits of Smoking Cessation*, Center for Health Promotion and Education Centers for Disease Control, Office on Smoking and Health, Rockville, Maryland 20857.
- 2 US Department of Health and Human Services 2004, *The Health Consequences of Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General*, US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2004.

What are the other benefits of quitting?

Although reducing your chances of premature death and illness is important, they aren't the only benefits of quitting smoking.

- > Think of the money you will save by not having to buy tobacco, around \$3,500 a year for a pack a day smoker!
- > Your costs for cleaning clothes, carpets, and furniture may go down.
- > Your sense of taste and smell will be enhanced. You will enjoy your food more.
- > You will have more energy to do the things you love.
- > Exercising will be easier.
- > You'll feel proud of your ability to overcome something so challenging. Many smokers remember the exact day they quit because it is a source of great pride.
- > Cigarettes will no longer control your life.
- > You will be setting a great example for children and other smokers.

Remember, it's never too late to quit smoking. The sooner you quit the better. Even quitting after smoking for many years will bring an array of important benefits. The fact sheets [Getting ready to quit](#) and [Products to help you quit smoking](#) have more information to help you quit.

For further information contact:

Tobacco and Health Branch,
NSW Department of Health
tel (02) 9391 9111

If you would like to quit smoking contact the [Quitline 13 7848](tel:137848) or speak with your doctor or pharmacist. Visit the website: www.quitnow.info.au