

# Facts about Smoking

Smoking is an addiction. Over 4,000 chemicals are found in cigarette smoke, many of which are known carcinogens to both humans and other animals. Nicotine, a drug found naturally in tobacco, is highly addictive and makes it very hard for a person to quit smoking once they have begun the habit.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of death in the United States, causing more than 440,000 deaths each year and resulting in an annual cost of more than \$75 billion in direct medical costs. Nationally, smoking results in more than 5.6 million years of potential life lost each year. Approximately 80% of adult smokers started smoking before the age of 18. Every day, nearly 4,000 young people under the age of 18 try their first cigarette.

## SECONDHAND SMOKE

(Adapted from [www.nvsmokefree.com](http://www.nvsmokefree.com) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention)

- Secondhand smoke is a mixture of the smoke given off by the burning end of a cigarette, pipe, or cigar, and the smoke exhaled from the lungs of smokers. The mixture contains more than 4,000 substances, some of which are known to cause cancer.
- Secondhand smoke has been classified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a known cause of lung cancer in humans (Group A Carcinogen).
- Secondhand smoke is known to cause lung cancer deaths in nonsmokers.
- Being around secondhand smoke causes irritation of the eyes, nose, and throat.
- Secondhand smoke also irritates the lungs. This can lead to coughing, excess phlegm, chest discomfort, and difficulty in breathing.
- Those most affected by secondhand smoke are children. Because their bodies are still developing, exposure to the poisons in secondhand smoke puts children in danger of severe respiratory diseases and can hinder the growth of their lungs. The effects can last a lifetime.
- Ventilation systems in homes cannot filter and circulate air well enough to eliminate secondhand smoke. Blowing smoke away from children, going into another room to smoke, or opening a window may help reduce children's exposure but will not protect them from the dangers of secondhand smoke.

## STATISTICS YOU NEED TO KNOW

(Adapted from [www.nvsmokefree.com](http://www.nvsmokefree.com))

- Tobacco use kills more people than the total number killed by AIDS, alcohol abuse, motor vehicle accidents, homicide, illegal drug abuse, and suicide combined. Even if the number of smoking-related deaths were cut in half, they would still kill more people than all of the other causes.
- Smokers are about twice as likely to die from cancer as non-smokers. Eight of ten people with emphysema smoke cigarettes. One-half of heavy smokers (those who smoke 25 or more cigarettes per day) will die of a disease that is caused by their smoking habit.

- Smoking causes 1 in 5 deaths in the US each year. Every day, almost 1,200 Americans die from smoking.
- 169,400 Americans contract lung cancer every year. 156,700 (93%) will die because of the disease. Of those deaths, 135,630 (87%) are smokers.
- Smoking causes 174,000 deaths from heart attacks in the United States each year. Smokers are about three times as likely to die from heart attacks as non-smokers. Among men aged 40-50, deaths from heart disease are nine times more common in smokers than in non-smokers.
- A cigarette smoker is 2.5 times more likely than a non-smoker to die before the age of 55 and twice as likely to die before the age of 75.
- More than 2,500 deaths of infants under one year of age are attributable to smoking by their mothers.
- 60% of children who smoke started by the age of 14. Children who smoke are 15 times more likely than non-smokers to begin using narcotic drugs.
- Cigarettes are the leading cause of fire death in the United States.
- A pack of cigarettes costs about \$0.05 to produce. However, most smokers spend \$5.00 or more per pack.

## ABOUT NICOTINE

(Adapted from [www.nvsmokefree.com](http://www.nvsmokefree.com))

Nicotine is a drug found naturally in tobacco. It is highly addictive and as addictive as other drugs, such as heroin and cocaine. Over the course of a smoker's life, their body becomes physically and psychologically dependent on nicotine. Studies have shown that smokers must overcome both of these dependencies in order to quit and stay quit.

When smoke is inhaled, nicotine is carried deep into the lungs where it is absorbed quickly into the bloodstream and carried to the heart, brain, liver, and spleen. Nicotine also affects many other parts of the body, including the heart and blood vessels, the hormonal system, and the body's metabolism. Nicotine can be found in breast milk and in cervix mucous secretions of smokers. During pregnancy, nicotine freely crosses the placenta and has been found in amniotic fluid and the umbilical cord blood of newborn infants. Mainly the liver and lungs metabolize nicotine, but a small amount is excreted by the kidneys.

Several factors can affect the rate of metabolism and excretion of nicotine. Measurements of nicotine or its by-products will vary depending on the fluid being measured (blood, urine, or saliva). In general, a regular smoker will have nicotine or cotinine present in the body for about three to four days.

Nicotine produces pleasurable feelings that make the smoker want to smoke more and also acts as a depressant by interfering with the flow of information between nerve cells. As the nervous system adapts to nicotine, smokers tend to increase the number of cigarettes they smoke, and hence the amount of nicotine in their blood. After a while, the smoker develops a tolerance to the drug, which leads to an increase in smoking over time. Eventually, the smoker reaches a certain nicotine level and then smokes to maintain this level of nicotine.

The longer someone smokes, the higher the dependency on nicotine, and the more difficult it becomes for the smoker to quit. When smokers first attempt to cut back the amount of

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cigarettes they are smoking, the initial absence of nicotine in their bloodstream leads to withdrawal symptoms that often kick the smoker back into their original habit.

In large amounts, nicotine acts like a poison. For example, nicotine has been used to kill insects. Nicotine makes the heart beat faster. This, in turn, increases the breathing rate and causes the body to use more oxygen. Nicotine causes other changes in the circulatory system, too. For example, blood vessels narrow and the blood travels through them more slowly, which causes hypertension for many smokers. Nicotine also appears to increase the tendency of the blood to clot and has been linked to diseases of the blood vessels and heart. The best way to guard your health is to stop smoking!

### SCHEDULING AN APPOINTMENT

Your primary care provider (PCP) at the University Health Service can help you quit smoking. Call 275-2662 to schedule an appointment at the University Health Service (UHS). UHS offers a full range of services. All visits to UHS are confidential.

### RESOURCES

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:** Comprehensive source of data, resources, and materials to help someone quit smoking. Materials are aimed at a variety of audiences.  
[www.cdc.gov/tobacco](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco)

**College Tobacco Prevention Resource:** A new website with facts about college tobacco use, strategies for comprehensive college tobacco prevention, recommended steps for taking action on campus, case studies, glossary and links, and frequently asked questions. [www.ttac.org/college/index.html](http://www.ttac.org/college/index.html)

**Joe Chemo:** Youth site promoting an end to tobacco advertising campaigns and targeting youth smoking initiation.  
[www.jochemo.org](http://www.jochemo.org)

**New York State Smokers' Quitline:** A resource of materials and support for smokers, former smokers, teens, and health care professionals. [www.nySmokefree.com](http://www.nySmokefree.com) and 1-888-609-6292

**Nicotine Anonymous:** Offers community outreach, materials, and information on group support to live tobacco-free. Features the twelve step program. [www.nicotine-anonymous.org](http://www.nicotine-anonymous.org)

**NOVA Online - Search for a Safe Cigarette:** A public broadcast devoted to the dangers of smoking.  
[www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/cigarette](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/cigarette)

**Office of the Surgeon General:** Offers numerous stop smoking materials. [www.surgeongeneral.gov/tobacco](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/tobacco)

**Quit 4 Life:** Canadian website with several stop smoking tips and how to deal with smoking triggers. [www.quit4life.com](http://www.quit4life.com)

**QuitNet:** A website developed to help smokers make personal quit plans, as well as access online community support and useful materials. [www.quitnet.com](http://www.quitnet.com)

**Quit Smoking Support:** Interactive stop smoking support, chat rooms, and numerous materials.  
[www.quitsmokingsupport.com](http://www.quitsmokingsupport.com)

**RxMax Well Company:** This website offers stop smoking help, including an online stop smoking program. [www.iwillstop.com](http://www.iwillstop.com)

**Smokefree.gov:** Tools, information, and support to help people quit smoking. Offers online support, materials, and step-by-step guides. [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov)

**Smokers' Health Project:** This intensive treatment program is for individuals who want to quit smoking, as well as those who do not. There are no fees for this program. Participants receive small payments at the end of each year for completing periodic questionnaires. Call 530-2050 for more information and an initial screening to determine eligibility.

**Try To Stop:** Comprehensive stop smoking site.  
[www.trvstostop.org](http://www.trvstostop.org)

### UNIVERSITY SMOKE-FREE ADVOCACY LINKS

**University of Maryland:** A link to the University Health Center Smoking Cessation Information Website  
[www.health.umd.edu/programs/smokingcessation.html](http://www.health.umd.edu/programs/smokingcessation.html)

**University of Rhode Island:** The Health Education Department offers a great source of smoking information.  
[health.uri.edu/healthed/index.html](http://health.uri.edu/healthed/index.html)

**University of Vermont:** The Center for Health & Wellbeing offers many services devoted to smoking cessation.  
[www.uvm.edu/health/tobacco](http://www.uvm.edu/health/tobacco)

**Virginia Commonwealth University:** The Quit Smoking Website [www.students.vcu.edu/health/QUIT/quitlinks.html](http://www.students.vcu.edu/health/QUIT/quitlinks.html)

### RELATED HEALTH LINKS

**American Cancer Society:** General information about cancer with statistical data. Can be useful for families, health care professionals, and cancer survivors. [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

**American Heart Association:** Comprehensive information on heart related diseases and activities of the AHA.  
[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)

**American Lung Association:** Focuses on asthma, tobacco control, and environmental health. Offers the Freedom From Smoking written guide, audiocassette program, and other information on local group clinics and online programs.  
[www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org)

**Dr. Koop's Community:** Provides the audience with general health information and benefits of quitting smoking.  
[www.drkoop.com](http://www.drkoop.com)

**National Institutes of Health:** A broad source of medical information. [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)

**New York State Department of Health:** New York State Department of Health Website with a direct link to the New York State Smokers' Quitsite. [www.health.state.ny.us](http://www.health.state.ny.us)

**Tobacco BBS:** Covers the business and politics of tobacco.  
[www.tobacco.org](http://www.tobacco.org)