



Smoking

For most of the hundreds of years since smoking became a habit, it was not known that it was harmful. In the middle of the 20th century, we became aware that it is one of the major causes of and contributors to preventable death. At least half of long-time smokers die prematurely. Studies also show that non-smokers live at least ten years longer than smokers. Why then, do people still smoke?

Nicotine

People who habitually smoke cigarettes develop a 'craving' for them. Cigarette tobacco consists of nicotine and several other dangerous chemicals. Nicotine is a highly addictive drug. Even when a smoker knows that tobacco and tobacco smoke is dangerous, the effect of nicotine is so powerful that they continue to use it. The unpleasant withdrawal symptoms outweigh the desire to quit.

Dangers of Smoking

Apart from the considerable financial loss, smoking poses serious dangers to health, both of the smoker, and of anyone nearby who happens to inadvertently breathe in the smoke 'second-hand.' This affects people in public places, and is especially a hazard for people living in the same household as the smoker. Smoke can linger on clothes, skin, hair and breath. Physical damage from smoking or from inhaling second-hand smoke includes:

- ◆ Stroke
- ◆ Hardening of the arteries
- ◆ Lung diseases, such as Emphysema
- ◆ Eye problems, such as macular degeneration or cataracts
- ◆ Cancers, such as bladder, gum, kidneys, lung, mouth and throat
- ◆ Brittle bones and skin damage including premature wrinkling and ageing
- ◆ Anxiety and stress can be experienced when you want a smoke but it's inconvenient at the time
- ◆ Bad breath and yellowing of the teeth
- ◆ Heart disease, including a heart attack
- ◆ Impaired circulation, leading to gangrene

Quitting

Most smokers admit that they would really like to quit. Sometimes you may hear a smoker say they are okay with the habit. It is more than likely that what they mean is that they are resigned to it. The unpleasantness that they feel if they try to quit is so bad that they believe they 'cannot' quit. This is unfortunate, because with the right help and support, they could quit the habit once and for all. How could anyone not want that! There is help available to those who make the decision to quit.

Quit programmes, some of which include medications are increasingly accessible. Attitudes towards the difficulties experienced by smokers are generally sympathetic rather than condemnatory. Many smokers have told me that you can't know what withdrawal is like unless you have experienced it.

Support from family, friends, colleagues and a trusted therapist helps keep them motivated, on track, determined to reach their goal, no matter how many tries it takes. The *Quitline* has information and help regarding quitting: www.quittas.org.au

If you would like help quitting, why not check out: [Mindfulness for Smokers](#), a course to help you quit, using Mindfulness and other self-regulation techniques? It could turn your life around for the better. Get in touch below to know more. Begin to turn your life round for the better today.

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