



What does a cigarette do to your body

Tobacco Smoke: A Toxic Mix

At least 43 chemicals in tobacco smoke are linked to the development of cancer. Some directly cause cancer: such as benzo(a)pyrene and urethane, while others combine with other chemicals to stimulate the growth of certain cancers. It contains poisonous substances including arsenic and hydrogen cyanide and nicotine, not to mention carbon monoxide, the deadly gas in automobile exhaust, in concentrations 400 times greater than is considered safe in industrial workplaces. Tobacco manufacturers use additives to manipulate the taste and effect of cigarettes. Ammonia for example, boosts the amount of addictive nicotine delivered by cigarettes.

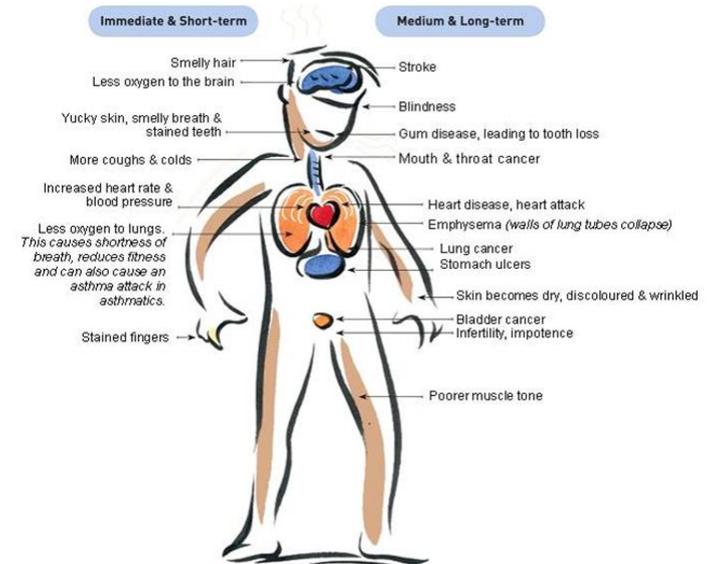
There's hardly a part of the human body that's not affected by the chemicals in the cigarettes you smoke. Let's take a tour of your body to look at how smoking affects it.

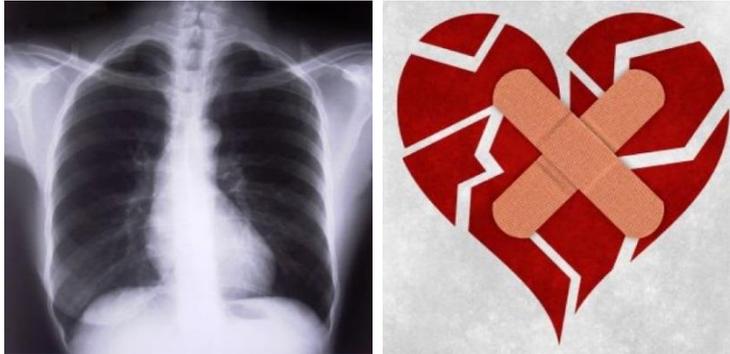
The Results

The health effects of smoking have results we can measure.

Forty percent of men who are heavy smokers will die before they reach retirement age, as compared to only 18 percent of non-smokers.

Women who smoke face an increased risk of cervical cancer, and pregnant women who smoke take a chance with the health of their unborn babies.





Skin

Smoking reduces the amount of oxygen to the skin. This means that skin ages more quickly and looks grey and dull. The toxins in your body also cause cellulite.

An effect on elastic tissue causes wrinkling of the skin of the face to develop earlier in chronic smokers. On average they look 5 years older than non-smokers of the same age.

Compared with non-smokers, smokers have a two to threefold higher risk of developing psoriasis.

Circulation

Smoking causes your veins and arteries to get narrower, harder and coated with fatty deposits. This can cause problems like low fitness levels, cold skin, hands and feet, ulcers, cramps, pains and blockages in your veins, which can cause strokes and heart attacks.

Its effects on blood vessels cause chronic pains in the legs which can progress to gangrene and amputations of the toes or feet. Gangrene, leads to about 2,000 amputations every year in the UK.

Heart

The effects of smoking on your heart are devastating. Nicotine raises blood pressure and makes the blood clot more easily. Carbon monoxide robs the blood of oxygen and leads to the development of cholesterol deposits on the artery walls.

Because your veins and arteries become blocked and narrow you are at an increased risk of heart attacks, strokes and aneurysms. Aneurysms are blockages in blood vessels, which can burst, this often leads to amputation or death.

Smoking is responsible for 30 percent of all heart attacks and cardiovascular deaths. Smokers are twice as likely to die of heart disease than non-smokers.

Lungs and Bronchi

Your lungs can be very badly affected by smoking. Coughs, colds, wheezing and asthma are just the start.

Moving down to your chest, smoke passes through the bronchi or breathing tubes. Hydrogen cyanide and other chemicals in the smoke attack the lining of the bronchi, inflaming them and causing that chronic smoker's cough. Because the bronchi are weakened, you're more likely to get bronchial infections. Mucus secretion in your lungs is impaired, also leading to chronic coughing.



Know the facts

Health



Smoking can cause fatal diseases such as pneumonia, emphysema, pleurisy (a form of severe chest infection) and lung cancer. In fact around 80% of all deaths related to lung cancer, bronchitis and emphysema are associated with smoking! Smokers are 10 times as likely to get lung cancer and emphysema as nonsmokers.

Pancreas

Smokers have higher rates of deadly pancreatic cancer.

Mouth and Throat

Smoking causes bad breath and stained teeth. It can also cause gum disease and alter your sense of taste.

The most serious damage that smoking causes in this area is the increased risk of cancer of the tongue, lips and mouth, voice box and esophagus.

Smokers may experience frequent headaches. And lack of oxygen. Narrowed blood vessels to the brain can lead to strokes.

Reproduction and fertility

For men, smoking can increase your risk of impotence, it can also damage sperm, reduce your sperm count and cause testicular cancer. It impairs erections in middle-aged and older men and may affect the quality of their sperm. It seems to "sedate" sperm and to impair their motility. This is reversed after stopping smoking.

For women smoking can make you less fertile, increase your risk of having a miscarriage, a low birth weight baby and cot death. Smoking also increases your risk of developing cancer of the cervix.

Kidneys

Many of the carcinogens from cigarettes are excreted in the urine where their presence can cause bladder cancer, which is often fatal. High blood pressure from smoking can damage the kidneys.

Bones

Smoking can cause your bones to get weak and brittle.

Women need to be especially careful, as they are 5%-10% more likely to suffer from osteoporosis than non-smokers.

Sources:

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Diagram text adapted from:

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