



Smoking - Benefits of stopping

Smoking removes oxygen from the blood excites the heart, and makes blood cells stick together. This often leads to high blood pressure, heart and/or lung diseases, stroke, and/or earlier death.

Passive smoking – breathing the smoke from other people – affects both adults and children, giving them increased risk of heart disease, lung disease, stroke, and/or earlier death.

The British Heart Foundation National Centre for Physical Activity and Health at Loughborough, [BHFNC](#), found that 19% of CHD deaths are related to smoking.

22% of the UK population over 16 smoke (2007 figure). This percentage has been dropping gradually over many years. The ban on smoking in public places helped many people to stop.

Stopping smoking is not easy. Do not be afraid to ask for help from your doctor or pharmacist. Nicotine is addictive. People who got advice and help more often succeeded in stopping.

The NHS Smoking helpline is 0800 169 0169. Advice and various leaflets on how to go about trying to stop smoking are available. For example enquire at a doctor's surgery or a pharmacy.

Tobacco smoke produces carbon monoxide, which is a poisonous gas that combines with haemoglobin in the blood. This reduces the blood's ability to carry oxygen around the body, putting a strain on the heart and making breathing more difficult.

The chemicals in tobacco smoke are carried from the lungs to vital organs such as the eyes, mouth, nose, throat, skin, stomach, brain, teeth, and nervous system. This increases the risks of [heart attack](#), cancer, stroke, dental troubles, and [peptic ulcers](#).

If you are a smoker and stop, the benefits include the following.

Within about two hours of stopping there is no more nicotine in your blood system. However it may take two days for nicotine by-products to leave your body.

Within 8 hours the oxygen level in the blood rises to normal, the heart rate slows down. Blood pressure drops slightly, but it may take from 3 to 30 days for blood pressure to return to normal level.

Between 12 and 24 hours carbon monoxide is excreted from your body. Lung efficiency begins to improve. You will be less short of breath when you exert yourself and your staying power will improve.

Within a couple of days you'll start to feel and smell fresher. Your taste buds will come alive and your sense of smell will return. You may also experience euphoria after achieving something you thought impossible.

Within days accumulated phlegm loosens in your lungs and you'll cough it up over the next few weeks. **Cilia**, the body's natural cleaning mechanism, begin to recover. It may take up to three months before cilia completely recover to sweep clean your lung passages efficiently.

Within three weeks your lungs are working better. Exercising is easier.

Within two months blood flow to limbs is improved. You'll have more energy and feel a sense of pride and satisfaction.

After three months your lungs' cleaning mechanism, cilia, will be working normally. Male's sperm will become more normal and the number increase.

Gradually over several months circulation improves, and blood components and cells lining your lungs return to normal. This may take a long time.

After 12 months the risk of sudden death from heart attack is almost half that of continuing smokers.

In four to five years the risk of heart disease has dropped to the same as that of non-smokers.

After five to ten years, the risk of lung cancer is about half that of smokers. After 10 to 20 years it becomes the same as that of non-smokers.

After 15 years the risk of sudden death from a heart attack is almost identical to that of non-smokers.

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