



# Smoking, Cancer and Your Health



## SOME FACTS ABOUT SMOKING

- Smoking is the main cause of preventable death and ill-health in Ireland.
- Smoking is the single biggest cause of cancer, causing 30% of all cancers.
- In Ireland, 6000 people die every year of smoking-related illnesses.
- Almost all cases of lung cancer are caused by smoking.
- Non-smokers who breathe in other people's tobacco smoke have a greater risk of lung cancer and other cancers.
- There are over a million smokers in Ireland.

## WHAT MAKES SMOKING HARMFUL?

Tobacco smoke is a mixture of over 4000 chemicals, many of which damage cells and cause cancer. Once inhaled, many of these chemicals pass into your bloodstream, and are then pumped around your body. They contribute to most smoking-related diseases.

Half of all smokers will die from their habit - half of them in middle age.



**TOLUENE**  
Industrial solvent

**CARBON MONOXIDE**  
Car exhaust

**CADMIUM**  
Batteries

**ARSENIC**  
Rat poison

**AMMONIA**  
Toilet cleaner

**RADON**  
Radioactive gas

**HEXAMINE**  
Barbecue lighter

**METHANE**  
Sewer gas

**TAR**  
Road surfaces

**ACETONE**  
Nail varnish remover

**NICOTINE**  
Pesticide

**POLONIUM-210**  
Radioactive element

**METHANOL**  
Rocket fuel

**HYDROGEN CYANIDE**  
Poison

**BUTANE**  
Lighter fuel



There are  
60 known  
cancer-  
causing  
substances  
in tobacco.

## THESE HARMFUL CHEMICALS INCLUDE:

**Nicotine** – a powerful, fast-acting and addictive drug which reaches your brain in seven seconds. It increases heart rate and raises blood pressure.

**Carbon monoxide** – a colourless poisonous gas found in high concentrations in tobacco smoke. When you inhale it enters your bloodstream and interferes with the working of your heart and blood vessels.

**Tar** – a sticky brown substance that forms when tobacco cools and thickens. It collects in your lungs and can cause cancer.

## WHAT TYPES OF CANCERS ARE LINKED TO SMOKING?

30% of all cancers are caused by smoking.

### Lung cancer

Lung cancer is the most common type of cancer caused by smoking. Almost all lung cancer cases in Ireland are due to smoking. About 1500 people develop lung cancer each year. Nine out of 10 lung cancers can be prevented by not smoking.

### Other types of cancers linked to smoking

- Mouth and throat
- Larynx and oesophagus
- Stomach
- Bowel
- Pancreas
- Kidneys
- Cervix
- Bladder
- Myeloid leukaemia

## WOMEN AND SMOKING

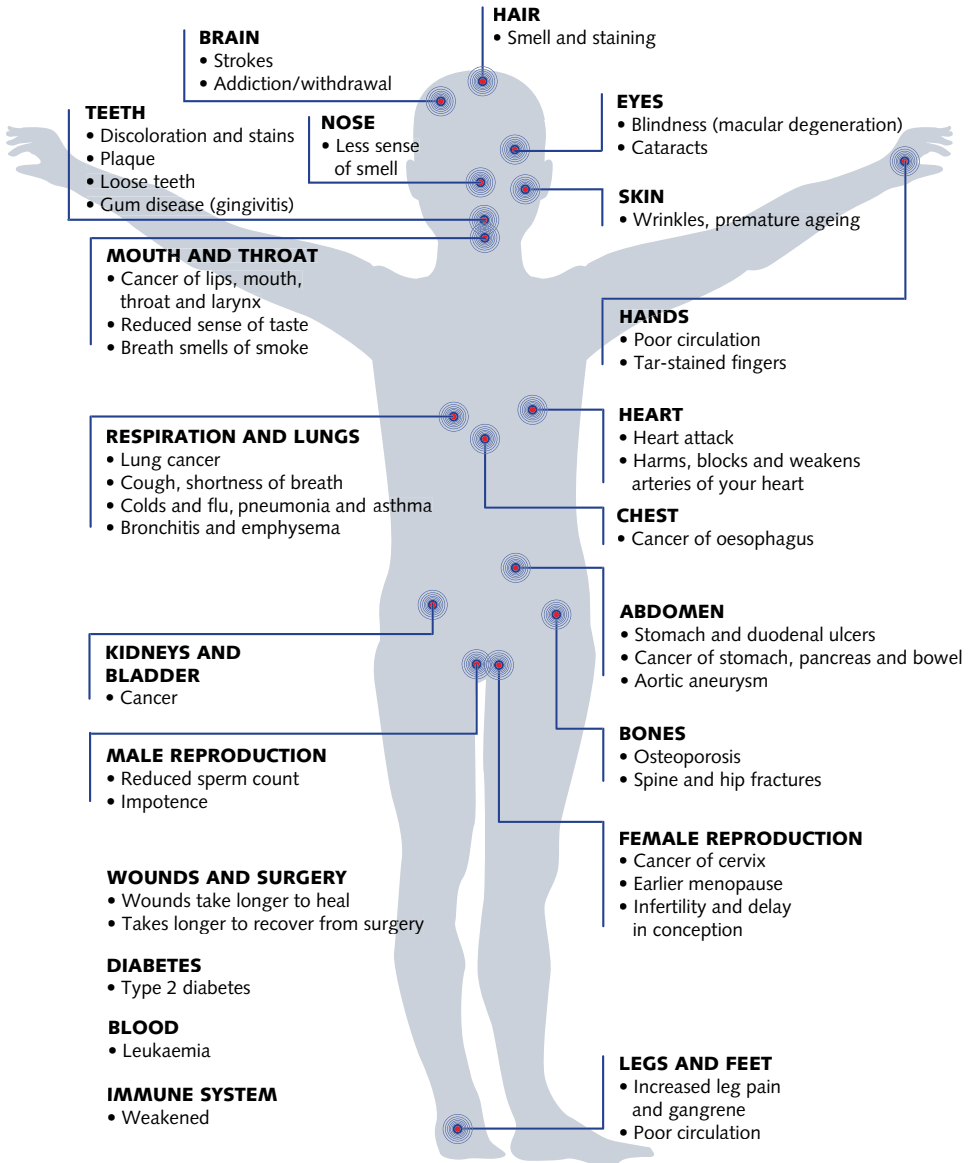
- Smoking increases your risk of developing cervical cancer.
- Smoking during pregnancy can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth and low birth weight.
- If you are planning to have a baby, smoking can reduce your fertility.
- Smoking can lead to early menopause in women.
- If you are a smoker and taking the contraceptive pill, you increase your risk of heart attack and stroke.
- Smoking contributes to osteoporosis (brittle bones) and a higher risk of bones breaking due to a low bone density.

Nine out of 10 lung cancers can be prevented by not smoking.



# HOW SMOKING HARMS YOU

## Parts of your body especially affected by tobacco



## PIPES, CIGARS AND ROLL-UPS

Smoking pipes, cigars and roll-ups are not safer than cigarettes. They also contain nicotine and many of the same cancer-causing chemicals as manufactured cigarettes.

## LOW TAR/LIGHT CIGARETTES

Smoking low tar or light cigarettes does not lower your risk of getting cancer. Low tar cigarettes still contain the same cancer-causing chemicals as regular cigarettes.

## SECOND-HAND SMOKE

Second-hand smoke is a mixture of smoke given off by the burning end of a cigarette and the smoke exhaled by the smoker. Non-smokers are at risk of cancer from breathing in either type of second-hand smoke.

### Some effects of second-hand smoke

- Lung cancer and probably other cancers
- Heart disease
- Breathing/chest problems in adults and children
- Children – cot death, middle ear infections
- Pregnant women – increased risk of miscarriage and stillbirth



## HOW CAN I REDUCE MY RISK?

Quitting smoking is the most important thing you can do to improve your health and to reduce your risk of lung cancer and many other cancers. The earlier you stop, the better the chance of reducing your risk. After quitting, the risk of developing cancer falls and continues to do so. For people who have already developed cancer, quitting smoking reduces the risk of developing a second cancer.



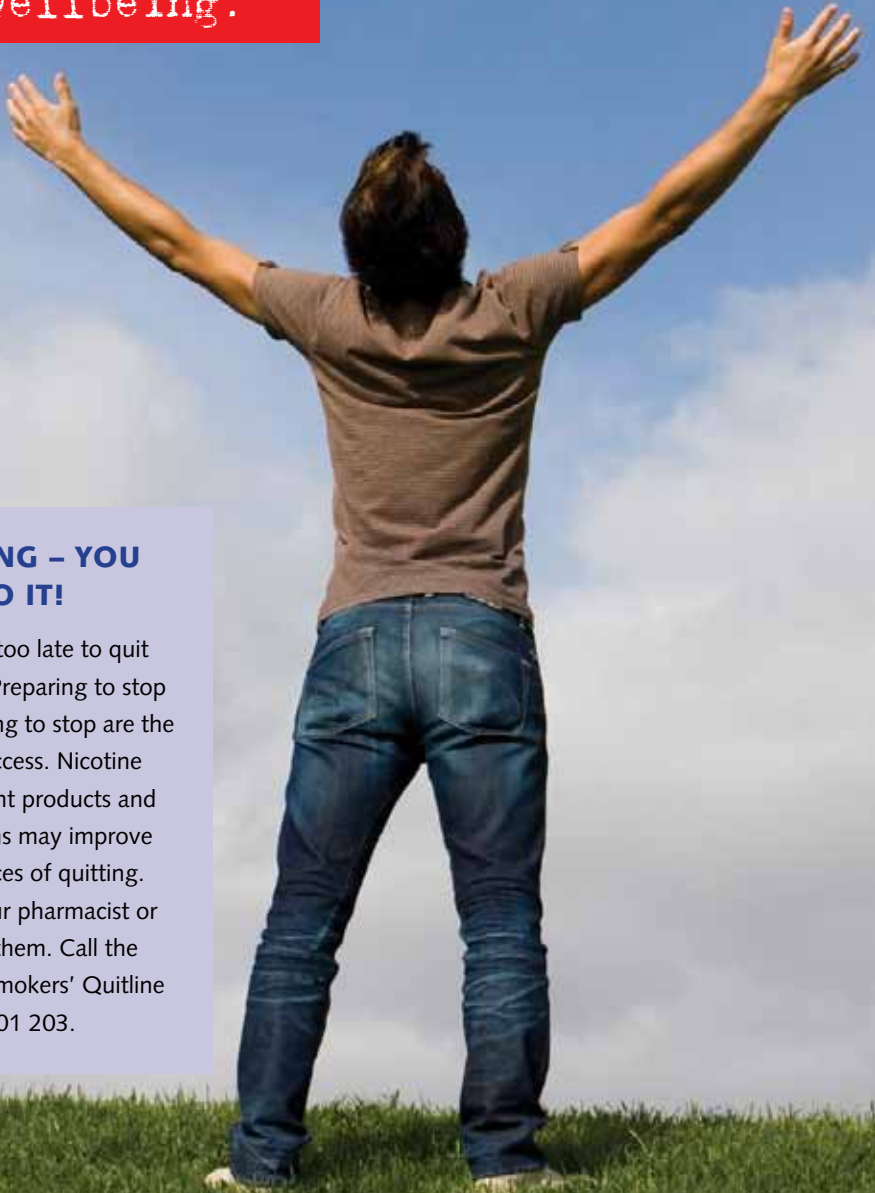
### Benefits of quitting

<b>20 minutes</b>	blood pressure and heart rate return to normal
<b>8 hours</b>	oxygen level in blood returns to normal
<b>24 hours</b>	carbon monoxide eliminated, lungs start to clear mucus, etc.
<b>48 hours</b>	senses of taste and smell much improved
<b>72 hours</b>	breathing easier, energy levels increase
<b>12 weeks</b>	circulation improves
<b>1 year</b>	risk of heart attack reduced by 50%, risk of lung cancer is also reduced

Quitting smoking  
is the best  
thing you can  
do to improve  
your health  
and wellbeing.

## **QUITTING – YOU CAN DO IT!**

It is never too late to quit smoking. Preparing to stop and wanting to stop are the keys to success. Nicotine replacement products and medications may improve your chances of quitting. Talk to your pharmacist or GP about them. Call the National Smokers' Quitline on 1850 201 203.



# 10 tips for quitting

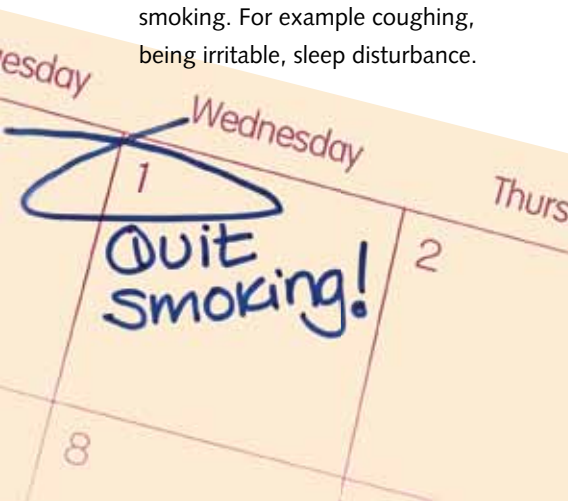
- 1. Prepare yourself for quitting.** Make a list of reasons for quitting – health, money, family. Make your home and car smoke-free.
- 2. Make a date to stop smoking.** Pick your date to stop smoking and stick to it.
- 3. Get support.** Get the support of family, friends, your GP, the National Smokers' Quitline or your local stop-smoking service.
- 4. Change your routine and plan ahead.** Smoking is often linked to certain times and situations – these are called 'triggers'. Replace these with new activities that you do not link with smoking.
- 5. Get physically active.** This can lead to good health and helps manage weight.
- 6. Think positive.** Withdrawal symptoms are positive signs that your body is recovering from the effects of smoking. For example coughing, being irritable, sleep disturbance.

- 7. Learn to deal with cravings.** Cravings can occur frequently during the first few days after stopping smoking. Distract yourself, drink water, deep breathe.
- 8. Start saving money.** Save the money you would have spent on cigarettes. Treat yourself regularly or watch your savings grow.
- 9. Watch what you eat.** Avoid snacking on chocolate bars and biscuits. Try some fruit or sugar-free gum instead.
- 10. Take one day at a time.** Remember everyday without a cigarette is good news for your health, your family and your pocket.

## Tips

### The 4 D's to deal with cravings

- **Delay at least 3 minutes and the urge will pass.**
- **Drink a glass of water or fruit juice (sip slowly).**
- **Distract yourself. Move away from the situation.**
- **Deep breathe. Breathe slowly and deeply. It will help you to relax.**



## STAYING OFF THEM

### Things you should do:

**Stay positive:** If you feel like giving in to temptation, remember how far you have come and why you decided to quit.

**Keep busy:** Boredom can make smoking seem more important to you than it really is.

**Be active:** Go for a walk, a run, a cycle – getting out and about helps you to take your mind of cigarettes.

**Save and reward:** Treat yourself with the money you have saved.

**Be careful when drinking alcohol:** It can affect your willpower.

### ...and things you should not:

**Just one:** Never think 'one cigarette won't hurt'.

**Don't be tempted to smoke with friends who smoke.**





## **THE EUROPEAN CODE AGAINST CANCER**

The European Code Against Cancer outlines healthier lifestyle choices that can help you avoid certain cancers and improve your general health. These include:

- If you smoke, plan to quit.
- Eat at least five servings a day of a variety of fruits and vegetables.
- Limit your intake of fatty foods.
- If you drink alcohol, limit your intake to no more than:
  - Two standard drinks a day for men
  - One standard drink a day for women.
- Do brisk physical activity every day.
- Be a healthy weight.
- Protect yourself from the sun and avoid sunburn, especially in children.
- See a doctor if you notice a lump, a sore that does not heal, a mole that changes in shape, size or colour, or bleeds in unusual circumstances.
- See a doctor if you have persistent problems, such as an ongoing cough or hoarseness, a change in bowel or bladder habit, or unexpected weight loss.
- Women from 25 years of age should go for cervical screening.
- Women from 50 years of age should go for breast screening.

## Further information

If you are a smoker and would like help quitting, call the National Smokers' Quitline on Callsave **1850 201 203**. Trained stop-smoking advisers can provide confidential information and support.

For further support, visit the HSE website:  
**[www.giveupsmoking.ie](http://www.giveupsmoking.ie)**

If you are concerned about cancers caused by smoking or about cancer in general, call the National Cancer Helpline on **Freephone 1800 200 700** to speak to a specialist nurse in confidence.

The Helpline is open:  
**Monday–Thursday, 9am–7pm**  
**Fridays, 9am–5pm.**

Those who wish to speak to a specialist nurse can also contact us through our:

- **Walk-in Service**  
Visit us in person at the Irish Cancer Society offices at:  
**43/45 Northumberland Road, Dublin 4**
- **Email Service**  
Email us at:  
**[helpline@irishcancer.ie](mailto:helpline@irishcancer.ie)**
- **CancerChat**  
Chat live on the web with a specialist cancer nurse at:  
**[www.cancer.ie](http://www.cancer.ie)**
- **Message Board**  
Visit our online bulletin board at:  
**[www.cancer.ie](http://www.cancer.ie)**

**National Smokers' Quitline  
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