

How does smoking affect the body?

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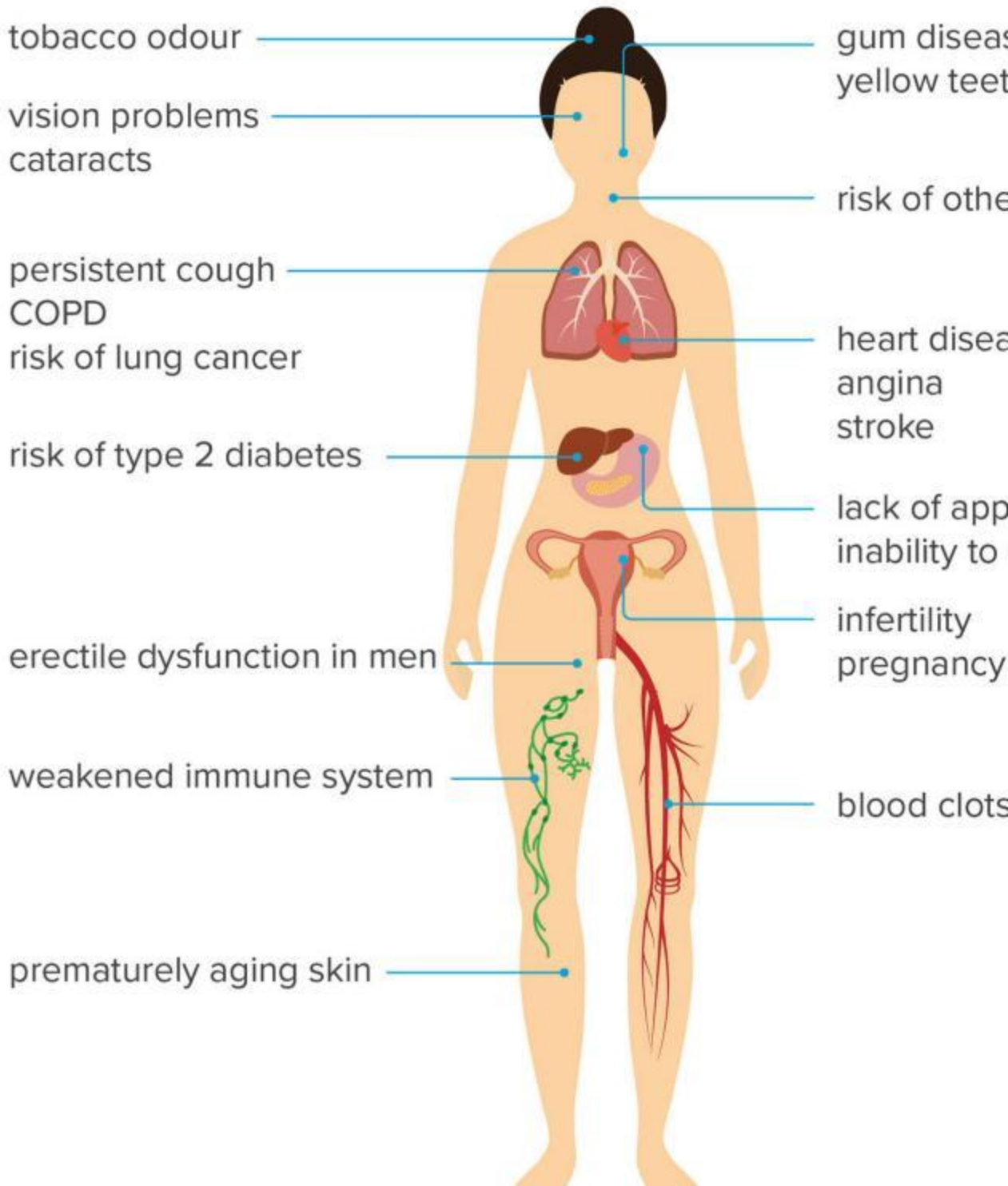
Smoking cigarettes can have many adverse effects on the body. Some of these can lead to life-threatening complications.

In fact, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), smoking cigarettes increases the risk of dying from all causes, not just those linked to tobacco use.

Smoking cigarettes affects the respiratory system, the circulatory system, the reproductive system, the skin, and the eyes, and it increases the risk of many different [cancers](#).

In this article, we look at 10 possible effects of smoking cigarettes.

Effects on the Body Smoking



1. Lung damage

Smoking cigarettes affects lung health because a person breathes in not only nicotine but also a variety of additional chemicals.

Cigarettes are responsible for a substantial increase in the risk of developing [lung cancer](#). This risk is [25 times greater for men and 25.7 times greater for women](#).

The CDC report that roughly [9 out of 10](#) lung cancer deaths is linked to smoking.

Smoking cigarettes also presents a greater risk of developing and dying from chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD). In fact, the American Lung Association report that smoking causes [80 percent](#) of COPD deaths.

Cigarettes are also linked to developing [emphysema](#) and chronic [bronchitis](#). They can also trigger or exacerbate an [asthma](#) attack.

2. Heart disease

Smoking cigarettes can damage the heart, blood vessels, and blood cells.

The chemicals and tar in cigarettes can increase a person's risk of [atherosclerosis](#), which is the buildup of plaque in the blood vessels. This buildup limits blood flow and can lead to dangerous blockages.

Smoking also increases the risk of [peripheral artery disease](#) (PAD), which occurs when the arteries to the arms and legs start to narrow, restricting blood flow.

[Research](#) shows a direct link between smoking and developing PAD. Even those who used to smoke face a higher risk than people who never smoked.

Having PAD increases the risk of experiencing:

- blood clots
- [angina](#), or chest pain
- a [stroke](#)
- a [heart attack](#)

3. Fertility problems

Smoking cigarettes can damage a female's reproductive system and make it more difficult to get pregnant. This may be because tobacco and the other chemicals in cigarettes affect hormone levels.

In males, the more cigarettes a person smokes and the longer they smoke for, the [higher the risk](#) of [erectile dysfunction](#). Smoking can also affect the quality of the sperm and therefore reduce fertility.

4. Risk of pregnancy complications

Smoking can increase the risk of ectopic pregnancy and reduce the baby's birth weight.

[According to the CDC](#), smoking can affect pregnancy and the developing fetus in several ways, including:

- increasing the risk of ectopic pregnancy
- reducing the baby's birth weight
- increasing the risk of preterm delivery
- damaging the fetus's lungs, brain, and [central nervous system](#)

- increasing the risk of sudden infant death syndrome
- contributing to congenital abnormalities, such as cleft lip or cleft palate

5. Risk of type 2 diabetes

The CDC report that people who smoke regularly have a [30–40 percent higher risk](#) of developing [type 2 diabetes](#) than those who do not.

Smoking can also make it more difficult for people with [diabetes](#) to manage their condition.

6. Weakened immune system

Smoking cigarettes can weaken a person's immune system, making them more susceptible to illness.

It can also cause additional [inflammation](#) in the body.

7. Vision problems

Smoking cigarettes can cause eye problems, including a greater risk of [cataracts](#) and age-related [macular degeneration](#).

Other vision problems related to smoking include:

- [dry eyes](#)
- [glaucoma](#)
- [diabetic retinopathy](#)

8. Poor oral hygiene

People who smoke have [double the risk](#) of [gum disease](#). This risk increases with the number of cigarettes a person smokes.

Symptoms of gum disease include:

- swollen and tender gums
- bleeding when brushing
- loose teeth
- sensitive teeth

Smoking tobacco can limit a person's ability to taste and smell things properly. It can also stain the teeth yellow or brown.

9. Unhealthy skin and hair

Smoking tobacco can affect a person's skin and hair. A person who smokes may experience prematurely aged, wrinkled skin. They also have a [higher risk](#) of [skin cancer](#), "especially on the lips."

Smoking can cause the hair and skin to smell of tobacco. It can also contribute to [hair loss](#) and balding.

Nicotine withdrawal symptoms and how to cope

Quitting smoking can be challenging, but knowing what to expect and how to cope can help.

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10. Risk of other cancers

In addition to the well-documented link with lung cancer, smoking cigarettes can also contribute to other forms of cancer.

The American Cancer Society report that cigarette smoking causes [20–30 percent](#) of [pancreatic cancers](#).

People who smoke are also [three times as likely](#) to develop bladder cancer than people who do not.

Smoking cigarettes can also [double a person's risk](#) of [stomach cancer](#). Tobacco is especially linked to stomach cancers that occur near the esophagus.

Cigarettes can also increase the risk of:

- [mouth cancer](#)
- [laryngeal cancer](#)
- [throat cancer](#)
- [esophageal cancer](#)
- [kidney cancer](#)
- [cervical cancer](#)
- [liver cancer](#)
- [colon cancer](#)
- [acute myeloid leukemia](#)

Secondhand smoke

Secondhand smoke can increase the risk of colds, make asthma worse, and damage the heart.

The ill effects of smoking cigarettes do not only affect people who smoke. Secondhand smoke can also have significant health effects on family members, friends, and coworkers.

Effects of exposure to secondhand smoke include:

- increasing the risk of colds and ear infections
- making asthma worse
- raising [blood pressure](#)
- damaging the heart
- reducing levels of high-density lipoprotein, or "good," [cholesterol](#)

Quitting

While [quitting smoking](#) can be challenging, the [CDC report](#) that today, there are more people who used to smoke than people who currently smoke.

Once a person stops smoking, the benefits start accumulating. These include clearer skin, improved oral health, more stable hormones, a stronger immune system, and a reduced risk of many types of cancers.

Some other benefits of quitting smoking [include](#):

- **After 20 minutes–12 hours:** Heart rate and carbon monoxide in the blood drop to normal levels.
- **After 1 year:** The risk of a heart attack is much lower, as is blood pressure. Coughing and upper respiratory problems begin to improve.
- **After 2–5 years:** The risk of stroke drops to that of someone who does not smoke, according to the [CDC](#).

- **After 5–15 years:** The risk of mouth, throat, esophagus, and bladder cancer is reduced by half.
- **After 10 years:** The risk of lung cancer and bladder cancer is half that of someone who currently smokes.
- **After 15 years:** The risk of [heart disease](#) is similar to that of someone who never smoked.

Nicotine is an addictive drug and can cause withdrawal symptoms when a person stops using it. These symptoms including cravings, increased appetite, and irritability. Cravings and other effects typically subside over time.

A doctor or other healthcare professional can help a person take positive steps toward quitting smoking.

[Read about some simple steps to quit smoking here.](#)

RELATED COVERAGE

Does nicotine cause cancer? Many people try nicotine replacement or vaping as an alternative to smoking cigarettes. However, people often speculate as to whether there is a link between nicotine consumption and cancer. The consensus is also unclear as to whether smokeless tobacco causes cancer. Learn more here. [READ NOW](#)

Everything you need to know about nicotine Nicotine is highly addictive and harmful. It is normally smoked in cigarettes but can lead to further drugs misuse also. Find out what nicotine does to the heart, lungs, arteries, and brain of an unborn fetus if someone smokes when pregnant, plus about e-cigarettes and vaporizers, and how they can affect your health. [READ NOW](#)

How does smoking affect people with asthma?

Smoking, secondhand smoke, and e-cigarette vapor can all aggravate a person's asthma symptoms. Learn more about the link between asthma and smoking here. [READ NOW](#)



What happens after you quit smoking?

Quitting smoking can be very daunting, but some of the benefits come much faster than anticipated. In fact, health benefits begin to take effect just one hour after a person has smoked their last cigarette. This article gives a timeline showing the benefits after 1 hour of quitting smoking through to 20 years later. [READ NOW](#)



What is nicotine dependence?

The majority of cigarette, cigar and pipe smokers have nicotine dependency. Nicotine is a highly

addictive substance that leads to life-threatening health substances. Smoking is the primary route for the administration of nicotine.[READ NOW](#)

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Article last reviewed by Thu 7 March 2019.

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All references are available in the **References** tab.

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1. [Secondhand smoke exposure linked to signs of heart disease: Exposure to tobacco smoke may be more dangerous than previously thought](#)

American College of Cardiology, ScienceDaily

2. [Surgeon General's report: tobacco smoke causes immediate cellular damage](#)

Healio

3. [Report reveals significant gaps in global awareness of tobacco's CV risks](#)

Healio

4. [Exposure to secondhand smoke places general public at severe health risk](#)

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1. [Tobacco myths persist 50 years after US Surgeon General warned Americans of smoking dangers](#)

University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, ScienceDaily

2. [CDC: Smoking rate among US adults reaches all-time low](#)

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3. [Secondhand Smoke Linked To Cervical Cancer](#)

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School Of Public Health And School Of Medicine, ScienceDaily

4. [Secondhand Smoke Is A Health Threat To Pets](#)

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