

Menopause

Women who smoke experience natural menopause at a younger age than women who do not smoke. Smoking may also cause more frequent and severe menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes. Women who have experienced menopause and also smoke are at a higher risk of developing osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis

Smoking is a known risk factor for osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is a condition where the bones become fragile and brittle, leading to a higher chance of bone fractures. Fractures can lead to long-term pain and disability, loss of independence and it may even contribute to premature death.

Quitting smoking at any age is beneficial as it increases your life expectancy and also greatly improves your quality of life.

The benefits of quitting

When you quit, you will feel immediate benefits as your body starts to repair itself.

For every hour, day, week, month and year that you do not smoke, your health will improve and your risk of serious diseases will be greatly reduced. Quitting also means you won't be exposing the people around you to the harmful effects of tobacco smoke.

When you quit, you will feel better and your breath, clothes and hair will smell fresher. You will also save money. If you usually spend \$15 a day on cigarettes but save this money instead, you can save \$5,475 every year by quitting smoking.

Giving up smoking can be hard, but when you do quit successfully, you will feel a real sense of achievement.

How to quit

To improve your chance of quitting smoking for good, it is a good idea to plan ahead. You may find these tips useful:

- **Get support:** Call Quitline 13 QUIT (13 7848) for free information, practical assistance and support. Quitline's trained counsellors are available seven days a week to help you get through the process of quitting.
- **Talk to your health professional:** Discuss quitting smoking with a general practitioner, pharmacist or community health worker, and plan your quitting strategy together.
- **Consider using pharmacotherapy:** Different products are available to help you quit smoking. Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) includes patches, gum, lozenges, sublingual tablets and inhalers. The aim of NRT products is to replace some of the nicotine from cigarettes without the harmful chemicals found in tobacco smoke, thus reducing withdrawal symptoms such as cravings and anxiety. Bupropion Hcl and Varenicline are non-nicotine medications that are also effective in helping smokers to quit.



Further information:

www.quitnow.info.au • www.cancerqld.org.au
www.health.qld.gov.au/quitsmoking
www.quitbecauseyoucan.org.au
Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20

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Smoking and your health

Information for women



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Smoking is a leading cause of premature death in Queensland women.

Women who smoke are at risk of developing serious smoking-related diseases.

Tobacco smoke contains more than 4000 chemicals, 69 of which are known to cause cancer. When you smoke, these toxic chemicals pass through your lungs and are absorbed into your bloodstream and carried around your body. Every cigarette you smoke causes damage and affects every organ in your body.

The health effects of smoking

Smoking causes:

- Lung cancer.
- Cervical cancer.
- Cancers of the mouth and throat.
- Cancers of the bladder, pancreas, kidneys and stomach.
- Acute myeloid leukaemia (cancer of the bone marrow).
- Coronary heart disease and stroke.
- Respiratory illnesses, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, pneumonia, bronchitis and emphysema.

Smoking also places women at risk of developing:

- Cancers of the liver and colon.
- Gastric ulcers.
- Poor circulation and gangrene.
- Increased risk of cataract and age-related macular degeneration (a common cause of blindness).

Personal appearance

Smoking can affect your personal appearance. The toxic chemicals in tobacco smoke are absorbed into your bloodstream and may impair blood flow to the skin. This leads to drying and irritation of the skin. Women who smoke tend to experience more facial wrinkling than women who do not smoke. Smoking also causes bad breath, makes your clothes and hair smell and stains your teeth and fingers.

Weight gain

Many women delay quitting smoking because they are worried about putting on weight. Although weight gain can be a concern, it is important to remember that continuing to smoke poses more of a risk to your health.

Quitting smoking does not automatically make you gain weight. Maintaining a balanced diet and being physically active can help you stay within a healthy weight range when you quit. Have a range of healthy snacks on hand to cope with cravings and make sure your diet contains a wide variety of foods. If worrying about putting on weight is stopping you from quitting smoking, talk to your health professional.

Fertility and menstruation

Women who smoke are more likely to have menstrual problems than women who do not smoke. Problems that can occur include severe period pain, premenstrual tension, irregular periods and missed periods. Also, if you smoke and take the contraceptive pill, you are nine times more likely to develop heart disease than women who do not smoke and take the pill. This risk increases with age.

Smoking affects the fertility of both women and men. Women who smoke may take longer to conceive than women who do not smoke. Smoking damages blood vessels in the penis, which may cause men to experience problems with getting or maintaining an erection.

Pregnancy

If you smoke while pregnant, toxic chemicals are absorbed into your bloodstream and passed onto your baby through the umbilical cord. Two of these toxic chemicals are carbon monoxide and nicotine. Carbon monoxide replaces the oxygen in your blood and reduces the amount of oxygen available to your baby through the umbilical cord. Nicotine increases your heart rate and your baby's heart rate. Nicotine causes your blood vessels to narrow, which reduces the flow of blood through the umbilical cord. This is definitely not good for your baby.

Your baby's risk of dying from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is significantly greater if you smoke during pregnancy. Smoking while pregnant also increases the risk of miscarriage, premature labour and birth complications. If you smoke, your baby is more likely to have a lower birthweight, which makes your baby vulnerable to health problems in infancy and early childhood. Quitting smoking at any stage during pregnancy has immediate and long-term benefits.

If you are pregnant, your womb does not protect your unborn baby from the harmful effects of tobacco smoke. Passive smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of SIDS and miscarriage and can affect your baby's birthweight and development.

Breastfeeding

If you continue to smoke while you breastfeed, toxic chemicals are passed onto your baby through your breastmilk. Although this is not good for your baby, it is better than not breastfeeding at all as breastmilk contains a wide range of essential nutrients for your baby.

Nicotine alters the flavour of breastmilk, and as a result, your baby may struggle at the breast or even refuse the breast. Women who smoke tend to produce less milk and wean their babies earlier than non-smokers.

Parenting

Young children are very susceptible to the health effects of tobacco smoke. Children with parents who smoke record nicotine levels the same as if they were actually smoking up to 150 cigarettes per year, and breathe in many of the same cancer-causing chemicals.

Babies and children exposed to tobacco smoke are also at serious risk of:

- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).
- Bronchitis, pneumonia and other lung or airway infections.
- Respiratory symptoms such as coughing and wheezing.
- Worsening of asthma.
- Middle ear disease ('glue ear').

Children with parents who smoke are more likely to try cigarettes in their teenage years and become regular smokers than children of non-smoking parents.

Parents are role models for their children, so setting an example by not smoking can reduce the likelihood of your children taking up smoking.

Queensland has tough tobacco laws to protect the public's health. Remember, it is against the law to smoke in cars carrying children under the age of 16 years.