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## Benefits of Stopping Smoking

Stopping smoking can make a big difference to your health and lifestyle. It is never too late to stop smoking to greatly benefit your health. For example, if you stop smoking in middle age, before having cancer or some other serious disease, you avoid most of the increased risk of death due to smoking. Help is available if you find it difficult to stop smoking.

### What are the dangers of smoking?

The benefits from stopping smoking begin straightaway. The following are examples of the dangers that can be avoided or reduced by quitting smoking.

You reduce your risk of getting serious disease no matter what age you give up. However, the sooner you stop, the greater the reduction in your risk. In fact, researchers have found that if you stop smoking before the age of 50 your risk of dying prematurely is virtually reduced to that of a non-smoker. Even if you give up after the age of 60, your risk of dying at any given age is reduced by about 39% compared to a person who carries on smoking.

- If you stop smoking you:
  - Reduce the risk of getting serious smoking-related diseases such as heart disease, cancers, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and peripheral arterial disease.
  - Reduce the risk of getting various other conditions which, although not life-threatening, can cause unpleasant problems. For example:
    - Erection problems (impotence).
    - Fertility problems.
    - Optic neuropathy - this is a condition affecting the nerve supplying the eye.
    - Cataracts.
    - A breakdown of the tissue at the back of the eye (macular degeneration).
    - A skin condition called psoriasis.
    - Gum disease.
    - Tooth loss.
    - 'Thinning' of the bones (osteoporosis).
    - Raynaud's phenomenon - in this condition, fingers turn white or blue when exposed to cold.
  - Reduce the risk of pregnancy complications if you are pregnant.
- If you have smoked since being a teenager or young adult:
  - If you stop smoking before the age of about 35, your life expectancy is only slightly less than it is for people who have never smoked.
  - If you stop smoking before the age of 50, you decrease the risk of dying from smoking-related diseases by 50%.
- But it is never too late to stop smoking to gain health benefits. Even if you already have COPD or heart disease, your outlook (prognosis) is much improved if you stop smoking.

### Timeline of health benefits after stopping smoking

After	Health Benefit
72 hours	Breathing becomes easier. Bronchial tubes begin to relax and energy levels increase.
1 month	Skin appearance improves, owing to improved skin perfusion.
3-9 months	Cough, wheezing, and breathing problems improve and lung function increases by up to 10%.
1 year	Risk of a heart attack falls to about half that of a smoker.
10 years	Risk of lung cancer falls to about half that of a smoker.
15 years	Risk of heart attack falls to the same level that it would be for someone who has never smoked.

## What happens when you quit smoking?

Benefits include:

- Your breath won't smell any more of stale tobacco.
- The smell of stale tobacco will also go from your clothes, hair and home.
- Foods and drinks taste and smell much better.
- Finances improve. You may well save as much as £3,000 per year if you smoked 20 a day.
- Better rates of insurance policies.
- You are likely to feel good about yourself.

So, if you have decided you would like to try to quit, see our separate leaflet called [Quit Smoking \(Smoking Cessation\)](#).

## Further reading & references

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