

# Smoking and your health: Information for women

*Every cigarette you smoke causes damage and affects every organ in your body.*

## 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 reduce your risk of serious diseases.
- Quitting means **you'll stop won't be exposing other people** to passive smoke.
- **You will save money**. If you smoke 20 cigarettes a day, you could save almost \$12,000 every year by quitting smoking.
- You **will set a great example for your children** and reduce the chance they will take up smoking

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

## How smoking may affect you as a woman

### Smoking causes:

- **Lung, cervical and mouth cancers**
- **coronary heart disease and stroke**
- **respiratory illnesses**, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, pneumonia, bronchitis and emphysema.

### Smoking also places women at risk of:

- **Osteoporosis** – a condition where bones become fragile and brittle, leading to a higher chance of bone fractures.
- **increased risk of cataract and macular degeneration (age-related)**—a common cause of blindness
- **fertility issues and pregnancy complications**

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

## Personal appearance and weight gain

Smoking can affect your personal appearance. Leading to:

- **dry and irritated skin**
- **more facial wrinkles**
- **bad breath, stained teeth and fingers.**

Many people delay quitting smoking because they are worried about putting on weight.

It is important to remember that continuing to smoke poses more of a risk to your health—you would need to gain **42 kilograms to neutralise the health benefits of quitting smoking.**

Maintaining a balanced diet and being physically active can help you stay within a healthy weight range when you quit.

Talk to your health professional if your worry about weight gain is stopping you from quitting.

## 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 syndrome (PMS)
- irregular/missed periods
- may take longer to conceive (compared to women who don't smoke)

**If you smoke and take the contraceptive pill, you are nine times more likely to develop heart disease than women who do not smoke.**

## Pregnancy

**Quitting smoking at any stage during pregnancy has immediate—and long-term—benefits.**

If you smoke while pregnant, toxic chemicals are absorbed into your bloodstream and passed to your baby through the umbilical cord such as carbon monoxide.

Smoking while pregnant also increases the risk of:

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- miscarriage
- premature labour
- birth complications
- Having a lower birthweight baby

## Breastfeeding

If you continue to smoke while you breastfeed, toxic chemicals are passed to your baby through your breast milk.

Nicotine in cigarettes alters the flavour of breast milk, and your baby may struggle at the breast or even refuse the breast.

## Parenting and passive 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 at serious risk of:

- SIDS
- bronchitis, pneumonia and other lung or airway infections
- respiratory symptoms, such as coughing and wheezing
- asthma
- middle ear disease (glue ear).

Parents are role models for their children, so setting an example by not smoking can reduce the chances 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 old.

## 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 flushes.

## Where can I get support to quit?

### • Quitline (13 7848)

Quitline is available 7 days a week offering support, encouragement and resources to people who want to quit smoking.

- The **Quit for You...Quit for Baby** program has been developed to support pregnant women, their partners, and women who are planning a pregnancy to quit smoking. The program combines specialised support with 12-week supply of nicotine replacement products (posted to you).
- The **Smoke-free Families** program is available for parents/carers/guardians of children aged 3 and under. The program combines specialised support with 12-week supply of nicotine replacement products (posted to you).



Both these programs are free, and available only from Queensland's Quitline service.

**If you're interested in quitting or would just like some information, call Quitline 13 7848.**

### • Talk to your health professional

Discuss quitting smoking with your general practitioner (GP), pharmacist or community health worker and plan your quit strategy together.

### • Consider using pharmacotherapy

Different products are available to help you quit smoking.

**Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)** includes patches, gum, lozenges, inhalers and mouth spray. The aim of NRT products is to replace some of the nicotine from cigarettes without the harmful chemicals found in tobacco smoke, which reduces withdrawal symptoms, such as cravings and anxiety.

**Varenicline and Bupropion Hcl** and are non-nicotine medications that are also effective in helping smokers to quit. These medications are available only on prescription. Your GP can help decide if they are suitable for you.

### • Other Resources

- Visit **Quit HQ** for more information on quitting smoking at [www.qld.gov.au/quithq](http://www.qld.gov.au/quithq)
- Download the '**MyQuitBuddy**' or '**Quit for You – Quit for Two**' app on your smartphone. For further information visit [www.quitnow.gov.au](http://www.quitnow.gov.au)