

Booklet 2

# Thinking about quitting



Aboriginal Respect Symbol. Designed by  
Marcus Lee Design for Cancer Council NSW.



**Cancer Council**  
Tackling Tobacco

# This booklet is written for people who are considering quitting smoking.

Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your physical and mental health, and it's great that you're thinking about quitting. It can help to talk to your health worker, nurse, doctor, support worker or the friendly people at the **Quitline** on **13 7848 (13 QUIT)**.

If you have a medical condition or are taking medication, make sure you speak to your doctor if you are thinking about quitting. Everyone has different reasons for why they smoke and it's the same for wanting to quit. It's important to know what it is that you do and don't like about both continuing to smoke and quitting.

In the table below, write down some of the positives and negatives about continuing to smoke vs. quitting.

	<b>Good things / things I like</b>	<b>Not-so-good things / things I don't like</b>
<b>Keep smoking</b>	<i>E.G. I enjoy smoking when socialising</i>	<i>E.G. It costs me a lot of money</i>
<b>Quit smoking</b>	<i>E.G. I will save more money</i>	<i>E.G. I am a little worried about weight gain</i>

**Sometimes it can also help to ask yourself:  
'How important is it to me that I quit smoking?'**

**On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is 'not at all important' and 10 is 'extremely important', circle the number that shows how important it is to YOU to quit smoking.**

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Not at all important to me that I quit smoking

Fairly important to me that I quit smoking

Extremely important to me that I quit smoking

**If it is important for you to quit smoking, ask yourself:  
'How confident am I that I can quit smoking if I decide to?'**

**On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is 'not at all confident' and 10 is 'extremely confident', circle the number that shows how confident you are that you can quit.**

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Not at all confident that I could quit smoking

Fairly confident that I could quit smoking

Very confident that I could quit smoking

If you feel that making a change is really important to you, but you lack the confidence, there are a lot of free support options to help you on your quitting journey. You can find these at the back of this booklet.

# Every cigarette you smoke is doing you damage.

## Smoking causes more death and illness than alcohol and all other drugs combined.

The short term effects of smoking are bad breath, yellow teeth, yellow fingers, wrinkles, and smelly hair and clothes.

Not only does smoking affect your appearance, cost money that could be spent on other things and damage your fitness, it can also cause long-term illnesses such as heart disease, cancer and stroke.

When you smoke, you inhale thousands of chemicals and poisons into your body. When these chemicals build up they can cause many diseases and make you sick. The longer you smoke, the more damage these chemicals and poisons are doing to your body.

Some of the diseases caused by smoking, such as heart disease, can start to affect people who smoke at any age, even in their 20s. These diseases can build up over a long period of time, reducing quality of life and causing much suffering.

In addition to the diseases above, smoking causes other problems:

### **Mental health**

You might smoke to relieve stress, but smoking only offers a temporary fix due to your nicotine levels being topped up. Smoking actually causes stress and can contribute to mental illness such as anxiety and depression.

Smoking also interferes with mental health medications. People who smoke may need more or less of these medications. It's important that you talk to your doctor before quitting if you take any prescribed medications.

### **Financial stress**

Smoking can be part of a cycle of financial stress and hardship. Being unemployed, without a stable home, or having too little money can cause enormous stress. Sometimes people use smoking as a way to cope with those difficult situations.

But when people spend a large proportion of their income on cigarettes, they have less money to pay for food, rent and other bills. This causes them more stress and they start to smoke more. The more you smoke, the more money you spend and the worse off you are, and so the cycle continues.

## **Heart disease**

Smoking clogs the blood vessels that take oxygen to the heart. You are more than twice as likely to have a heart attack if you smoke.

## **Stroke**

Smoking can block the blood vessels in your brain, causing a stroke. Having a stroke means you might not be able to walk or move your arms and hands as you normally would. It can also cause brain damage, which can affect your ability to speak, eat and breathe.

## **Your lungs**

If you smoke, you are more likely to damage your lungs (get bronchitis and emphysema), which makes breathing very hard and noisy. When people stop smoking, they often cough more at first. This is good news. It means tar is being cleared from their lungs.

## **Circulation**

Smoking can block arteries in your legs. These blockages can slow blood flow to the legs and this can lead to sores not healing and even gangrene which can lead to the amputation of toes or legs.

## **Cancer**

Smoking causes 16 types of cancer including lung, mouth and throat, stomach, bladder, liver, kidney and pancreas. Even people who smoke between 1–5 cigarettes per day have an almost 10-fold increased risk of getting lung cancer. Tobacco smoke has an estimated 7,000 poisons and chemicals, many of which are dangerous to your health.

## **Pregnancy**

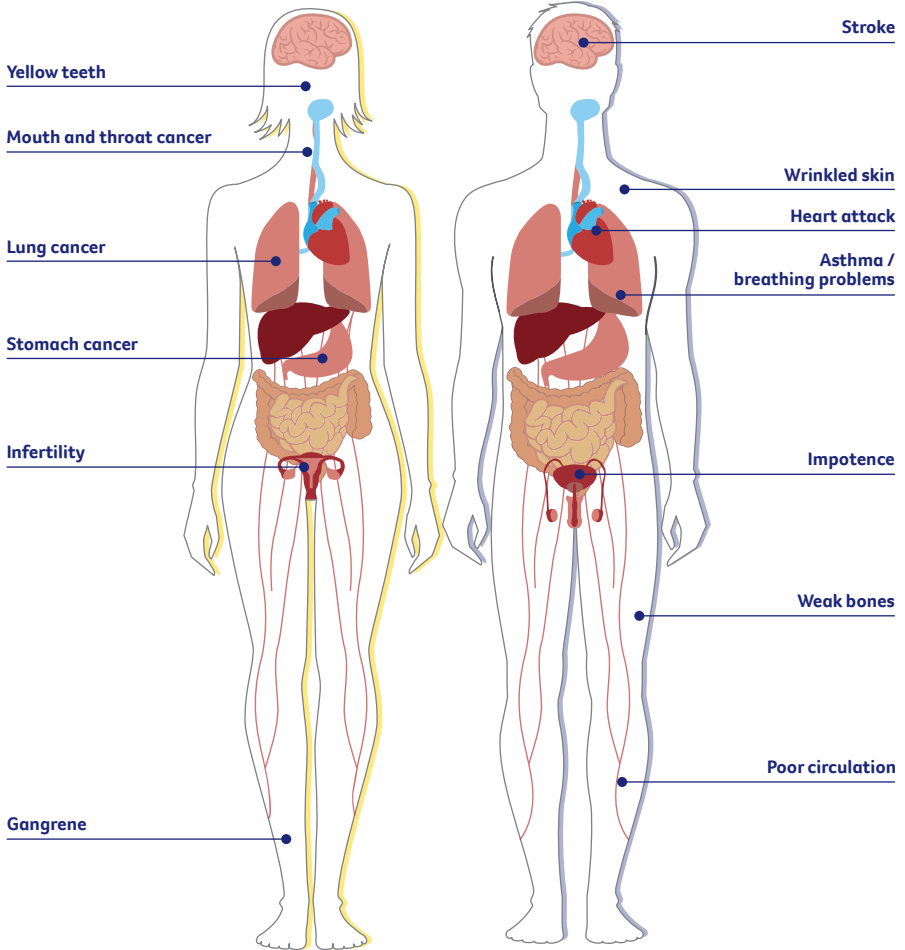
Smoking when you are pregnant means your baby smokes too. Smoking can cause your baby to be born too early and be a low birth weight baby, increase your risk of miscarriage or stillbirth, and cause breathing problems for your baby once born, such as more frequent chest infections.

## **Sexual health**

Smoking affects the amount of blood going to the penis, so it is more difficult to get or maintain an erection (impotence). Smoking can also reduce the number and health of sperm.

# The health effects of smoking on your body.

Many studies have shown that smoking is bad for our health and that there is no safe level of smoking. This diagram shows some of the ways smoking can affect our bodies.



# Barriers to quitting smoking.

## ***“I’m good until my friends come round”***

It’s hard not to smoke when people around you are smoking. Some friends will joke, offer you cigarettes, and say you won’t last. Asking them for support during this period can be helpful. Alternatively, you may want to avoid these friends for a couple of weeks.

If you stick to it, friends will get used to you not smoking and respect you for your decision.

## ***“I’ve tried to stop before and/or I’ll stop when I get older”***

Most people try several times before they finally quit smoking. The more times you try to quit, the more likely you are to succeed!

Some people may quit on the first attempt. Don’t worry if you don’t! Even if you don’t succeed, each time you try to quit smoking you will learn something new and it can help you the next time. If people around you think you haven’t got the willpower, show them you are serious and try again.

Smoking can affect you even in your 20s. Quitting can be challenging no matter what your age, and it gets harder the longer you smoke.

## ***“I want to stop but I get sick and moody”***

This could be due to nicotine withdrawal. Your body will take a few weeks to get used to not having nicotine any more. After that, you will start to feel better. It can help to think of withdrawal symptoms as ‘recovery symptoms’. Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) such as patches, gum, lozenges, mouth spray, inhalers, may help you to manage cravings.

## ***“I really don’t have the willpower”***

Willpower is not something we are born with or have 100% of the time. The important thing is to be clear about your reasons for quitting smoking and to have other supports in place for when you are not feeling strong. Remember, smoking is physically addictive.

## ***“I may put on weight if I stop smoking”***

Some people may gain weight when they quit. Using nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), getting some exercise and avoiding sugary snacks to deal with cravings/increases in appetite will help decrease the amount of weight you gain.

# Benefits of quitting smoking.

## ***“A couple of weeks after quitting smoking I wasn’t thinking about it as much”***

At first, you may not be able to stop thinking about smoking. But it does get easier and you will feel like a new person. You won’t feel as if cigarettes control you.

## ***“I felt healthier almost straight away”***

As soon as you quit smoking your risk of cancer, stroke and heart disease starts to go down. Soon after quitting you will feel healthier, taste food better, breathe easier and have more energy. Remember, you may cough a bit more at first because your lungs are getting cleaner. If you are struggling with withdrawal symptoms, remember there are medications and nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) that can really help.

## ***“I feel in control”***

You don’t have to worry about running out of cigarettes, or being in places where you can’t smoke.

## ***“I smell better now”***

Many people who have quit smoking like the fact that their clothes and breath do not smell of smoke any more.

## ***“I have heaps more money”***

The money you save adds up. If you smoke one pack of cigarettes a day, you could save \$175+ a week, \$700+ a month, or more than \$10,000+ a year. You could use this to buy clothes or pay bills or for going out.

People with less money have higher smoking rates than people who are better off financially. This could be because they grow up in communities where there are lots of people who smoke, more hassles and limited opportunities for education, employment or recreation.

Because they have less to start with, people with low incomes who smoke spend a bigger proportion of their income on cigarettes than other people who smoke. This means they spend less money on food and other essential items. It also means those with less money experience more financial stress and greater health problems.





**Better physical health.** You will reduce your risk of cancer, heart disease, and other chronic diseases.



**Better mental health.** While smoking might make you feel better in the short term, those who stop smoking generally report being less stressed and anxious overall.



**Saving money.** You will save money by not having to buy tobacco; nearly \$10,000 a year for a pack-a-day.



**Your senses** of taste and smell will improve.



You will enjoy your **food** more.



You will have **more energy** to do the things you enjoy.



**Exercising** will be easier.



Cigarettes will no longer **control your life**.



You **won't need** to go outside to smoke all the time.



You will be setting a **great example** for children and other people who smoke.

Quitting smoking is one of the greatest things you can do for your health and your wallet. For someone who smokes a pack a day, quitting smoking could mean an extra:

<b>\$180</b> a week	<b>\$730</b> a month	<b>\$9,500</b> a year
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Which means you could afford things like:

Looking after your pets	A tablet or smartphone	Gym membership for a year
Clothes	A relaxing holiday	Enrol in a course
Groceries for the family	Six months' rent	A second-hand car

Source: <https://www.cancerouncil.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Financial-benefits-of-quitting-%E2%80%93-adults.pdf>



## **If you decide not to quit yet.**

That's OK. It's up to you to decide if and when you want to quit. But even if you don't want to quit right now, you can make sure that your smoking doesn't affect others by:

### **Smoking outside whenever you can**

When other people breathe in the smoke from your cigarette it can harm their health.

### **Not smoking around babies, children or older people**

Babies, children and older people who are exposed to second-hand smoke are more likely to have inflammation of the airways, and are more susceptible to allergies and lung infections.

### **Making your home and car smoke free**

Smoke becomes concentrated in a confined space.

### **Supporting your family and friends when they are trying to give up**

You may not want to quit, but your support for others could really help them quit.

### **Not smoking at all if you are pregnant**

Avoid smoking around people who are pregnant and do not smoke if you are pregnant yourself.

You can talk to your health worker, nurse, doctor or support worker about quitting. You can also speak to a quit smoking counsellor for free\* by calling Quitline on **13 7848 (13 QUIT)**.

\*The cost of a local call with higher costs from mobile phones.

For more information, see your health worker, nurse, doctor or support worker about quitting. Quitline can help you by providing free information and support.

You can call them on **13 7848 (13 QUIT)** for the cost of a local call with higher costs from mobile phones.

## Remember

- Everyone has different reasons for why they smoke and it's the same for wanting to quit. You need to weigh it up for yourself.
- Smoking causes more death and illness than alcohol and all other drugs combined.
- If you do give up smoking it may be hard for your body for a few weeks while your body adjusts to being nicotine free. Think of this as 'recovery' rather than 'withdrawal'.
- **Quitting smoking is one of the greatest things you can do for your health and your wallet.**

## Acknowledgements

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**We're here for all Australians affected by cancer.  
Call 13 11 20 for information and support.**

