



The health effects of smoking

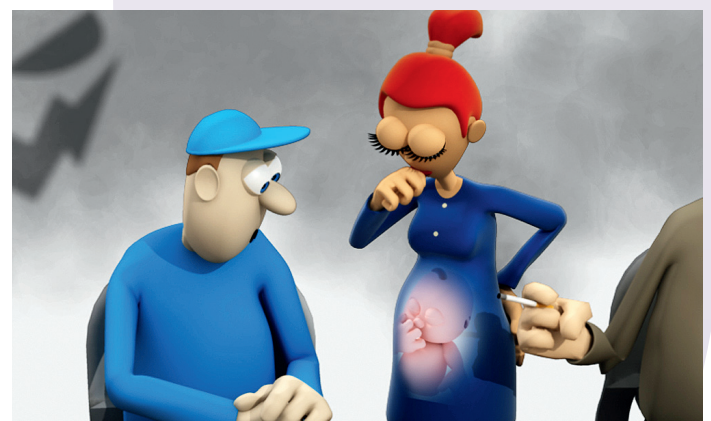
Today, the harmful effects of smoking tobacco are well documented, both for smokers themselves and for those exposed to cigarette smoke.

In the European Union, over half a million deaths per year are estimated to relate to smoking. In order to protect non-smokers at work, and to encourage smokers to quit smoking, recent European recommendations have been made to promote smoke-free workplaces. Workplace smoking bans have been implemented in several EU countries. Already there is some evidence that this approach is working, as the number of people having heart attacks fell since the indoor smoking ban was introduced.

Be aware that:

- Cigarette smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals, 70 of which may cause cancer. It also increases the risk of heart disease, vascular disease and respiratory disease.
- Smoking reduces female fertility and the toxic substances in tobacco smoke may have harmful effects on the developing unborn child. The most frequent problems caused are miscarriage, growth retardation and disorders of the placenta (which feeds the embryo).

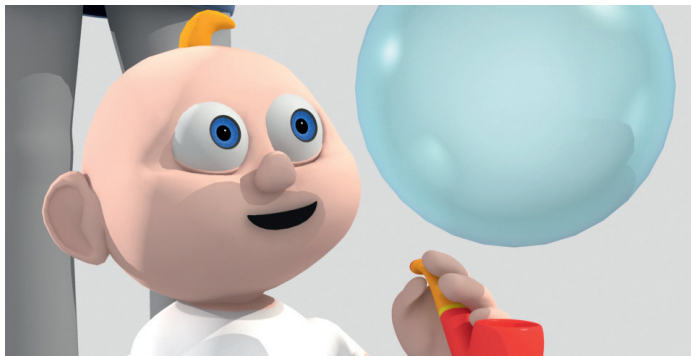
- Smoking increases the risk of erectile dysfunction and may have an adverse effect on male fertility.
- Smoking alters taste and smell, is associated with bad breath and increases the risk of tooth loss by up to threefold in heavy smokers. The risk can revert following cessation.
- The effects of smoking are not limited to the smoker as Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS, also called second hand smoke) also contains dangerous substances. The smoker therefore risks the health of his/her surrounding colleagues, customers, friends and family.



Why should you consider stopping smoking?

It is never too late to stop smoking, but it is better to quit before health problems develop. By giving up smoking you:

- Live longer – one in every two smokers die early, losing around 16 years of life.
- Halve your risk of having a heart attack within 5 years of stopping.
- Halve the risk of lung cancer within 10 years of stopping.
- Increase your fertility and reduce your risk of erectile dysfunction.
- Reduce the risk of lung cancer and heart disease for your family and friends caused by your second hand smoke.
- Set a good example for your children.
- Help your children avoid asthma attacks and chest infections.
- Save money to spend on other things.
- Have fewer wrinkles, whiter teeth, and enjoy the taste of food more.



What are the obstacles to quitting?

Cigarettes contain nicotine which is highly addictive and once levels fall in the bloodstream you will crave another cigarette. This might be less than an hour after the previous cigarette. Smoking is a learned habit and is associated with pleasurable experiences, such as having a cigarette after a meal. Although the risks are widely known, there are still some “false truths” about smoking among the general public.

Some commonly held “false truths”

- “I’m not a heavy smoker and smoke low tar cigarettes so my health will not be adversely affected”.
- “I never inhale so I won’t get respiratory problems or lung cancer”.
- “I am only a social smoker so I don’t have an addiction”.
- “My grandfather smoked all his life and never had problems so I must have lucky genes”.
- “Only smoking can relieve my stress”.
- “I’ve always smoked and it’s too late for me to stop”.
- “I’ll gain weight if I stop smoking”.

However, none of these statements are based on any sound scientific evidence. **There is no safe level of smoking. You can change your habits at any age and can be supported by your friends, family, employer and colleagues.**

If you decide to quit smoking, tell your employer you are doing so and ask for their support. Encourage your employer to implement a smoking ban in the workplace (if this is not yet the case). You may also ask him/her to provide you with a smoking cessation programme. Recommend that they read *Advice for employers to create a healthy working environment* leaflet.

More information:

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, Preventing a negative impact of tobacco smoke in the workplace:
<http://osha.europa.eu/en/topics/whp/preventing-a-negative-impact-of-tobacco-smoke-in-the-workplace>

Napo film on tobacco smoke:
<http://osha.europa.eu/en/topics/whp/smoke-at-work>

Read also the leaflets *Advice for non-smokers* and *Advice for employers*.



Worth to know: the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Health and Consumers has launched in 2011 a new anti-tobacco campaign called “Ex-Smokers Are Unstoppable”. This 3 year campaign features an extremely effective tool to help smokers quit. iCoach is a free access digital health coaching platform available in all the official EU languages. Unlike other digital health tools, the iCoach also focuses on those unwilling to quit and those with a high relapse risk. Results are impressive with some 30% who start the programme actually quitting. For more information:
www.exsmokers.eu