

THE HIDDEN DANGERS OF SMOKING: WHY IT'S TIME TO QUIT

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Smoking's a habit you've likely observed depicted in classic films, presenting an image of a stylish and enigmatic quality. But it's a really dangerous habit one can acquire. Every year, many people die from sicknesses caused by smoking, and many also live with its painful effects. More than 5.9 trillion cigarettes are smoked worldwide every year [3]. So, what makes smoking so bad? Let's dissect and uncover the reason why a minuscule cigarette possesses such vast significance.

Initially, tobacco consumption severely affects your respiratory system. All that tar and those repugnant chemicals in the smoke rupture the fragile tissues. Over time, it can cause breathing problems like COPD, emphysema, and lung cancer. The American Cancer Society declares that approximately 80% of lung cancer fatalities are due to smoking. And it can happen not only in your lungs but also cause cancers in your mouth, throat, swallowing tube, and bladder [1]. Imagine how one small cigarette starts a chain reaction of destruction throughout the body. Crazy, right? Who'd think one habit could mess with so many parts of you?

Also, smoking might harm your mind, as nicotine addiction can make anxiety and stress levels increase gradually over time. But wait, there's more. Your heart takes a beating too. Smoking escalates blood pressure, accelerates heartbeats, and thickens blood, potentially occluding arteries and causing cardiac events or cerebrovascular accidents. Smokers are two to four times more likely to get heart disease than non-smokers [2]. Picture your heart straining endlessly every time it sparks up; it's equivalent to compelling it to scale a peak without pause.

The exertion doesn't conclude afterwards. Smoking messes with nearly everything in your body. Women may find it harder to conceive and face issues such as early deliveries or delivering babies who are smaller

in size. Oh, and your teeth? Say hello to gum disease and tooth loss. I'll never forget my uncle, who smoked for over 30 years. Watching him struggle to breathe with COPD, stuck on an oxygen tank, was rough. He'd tell you himself now: every puff was a mistake he wished he could take back.

It's not just about you, either. Smoking spills over into other people's lives. Secondhand smoke kills thousands of non-smokers every year—pretty unfair, if you ask me. Beyond health risks, smoking trashes the environment too, with cigarette butts being the most littered item on the planet, polluting land and water alike [1]. I've stepped over those soggy stubs on the beach, each one a tiny scar on the earth. These little charred filters are like drops of poison for nature.

The money side is also impressive. Healthcare systems spend billions treating smoking-related problems, and that's not even counting the jobs lost when people get sick or die too soon [3]. Some folks say smoking's their personal choice, but when you see how it hits everyone around, it's hard to argue it's just about “freedom.”

So, what's the big picture here? Smoking's a killer, plain and simple. But here's the bright spot: you can quit, and it's worth it. Your body starts fixing itself almost right away after you stop. In just a year, your heart disease risk drops big-time.

There's help out there too – think nicotine patches, counseling, or even just a friend to cheer you on. Quitting's no picnic, but man, is it worth it. If you smoke, maybe this is your nudge to try. And if you know a smoker, pass this along – it could be the push they need to save their life.

References

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3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Economic Trends in Tobacco. – URL: https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/economics/econ_facts/index.htm(date of access: 19.03.2025).