

Chest  
Heart &  
Stroke  
Scotland



# STOPPING SMOKING



ESSENTIAL GUIDE

# This Essential Guide is about stopping smoking.

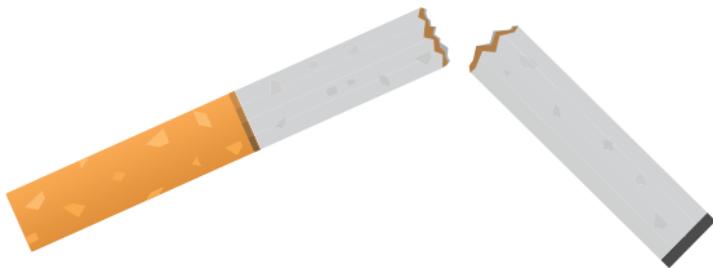
**It explains:**

- Why smoking is bad for you.
- The benefits of stopping smoking.
- What you can do to help you stop smoking.

# Smoking and your health

Stopping smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health. It improves your breathing, your fitness, and your ability to fight off disease.

Stopping smoking reduces your risk of serious health conditions. These include heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), heart attack, stroke, and cancer.

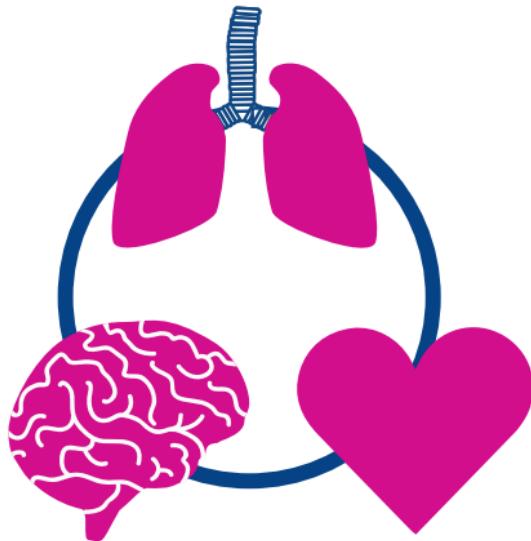


# The facts

If you smoke 20 cigarettes a day you are 6 times more likely to have a stroke compared to a non-smoker.

Smoking doubles your risk of having a heart attack.

Up to 1 in 4 long-term smokers will develop chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).



# Smoking and your arteries

Your blood is carried around your body by blood vessels, including your arteries. Your arteries have smooth walls, making it easier for your blood to flow through.

There are **thousands of harmful chemicals** in cigarette smoke. These chemicals make the walls of your arteries rough and sticky. As a result, fatty material in your blood sticks to the walls of your arteries and builds up over time.



# Smoking, heart attack and stroke

The build-up of fatty material narrows your arteries and increases your blood pressure and heart rate.

Smoking also makes your blood thicker and sticky. This increases the chance of blood clots forming.

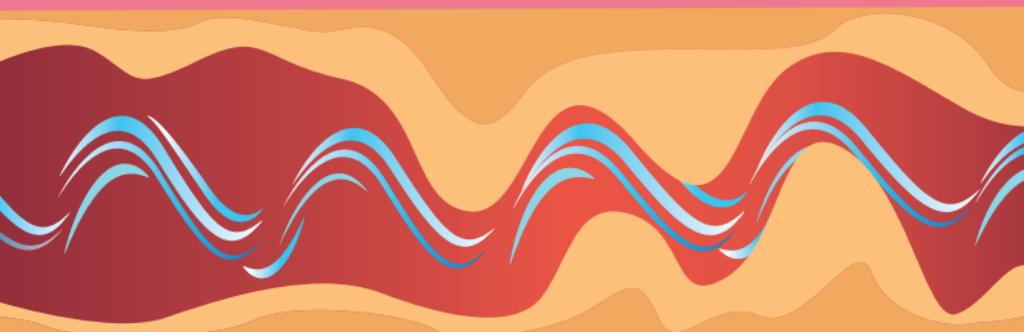
Either one of these can lead to one or more arteries becoming blocked.

If an artery carrying blood to your heart becomes blocked, it can result in a heart attack. If an artery carrying blood to your brain becomes blocked, it can result in a stroke.

**Normal Artery** (smooth walls, easy blood flow)



**Narrowed Artery** (rough, sticky walls, restricted blood flow)



# Smoking and your lungs

Smoking increases your chances of developing a serious chest condition.

When you smoke, extra mucus (also called sputum, phlegm or spit) is produced in your lungs. Smoking affects the ability of your lungs to clean out this extra mucus. This damages and ultimately destroys the cilia that move mucus up through your airways. This damage means mucus builds up in your airways, making you cough.

Cigarette smoke also includes a lot of chemicals, tar and dust particles. These can build up in your airways over time.

The chemicals in smoke also destroy lung tissue and irritate your airways. As a result, your airways get narrower. This makes it harder to breathe.



# Stopping smoking

The benefits of stopping smoking start as soon as you quit.

These benefits include:

- Reducing your risk of developing a serious health condition.
- Saving money – if you smoke 20 cigarettes a day, stopping smoking could save you over £3,500 a year. Home, life and car insurance may also be cheaper.
- Protecting your family and friends from ill health caused by second-hand smoke.
- Reducing your children's chances of developing bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma, meningitis and ear infections from breathing in your smoke.

## Stopping smoking also improves your:



Breathing



Fitness



Sense of taste



Breath



Skin and teeth



Fertility

# What happens when you stop smoking...

- After **20 minutes** your blood pressure and pulse improve.
- After **8 hours** the oxygen levels in your blood improve.
- After **1 day** your lungs start to clear out mucus and other debris caused by smoking.
- After **3 to 9 months** breathing problems improve as your lungs get better.

- After **1 year** your risk of heart disease is about half that of a person who is still smoking.

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- After **5 years** your risk of stroke has fallen to the same as someone who has never smoked.

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- After **10 years** your risk of lung cancer has fallen to half that of a person who is still smoking.

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- After **15 years** your risk of heart attack falls to the same as someone who has never smoked.

# How to stop smoking

Seek professional help through the NHS Quit Your Way programme, your GP or your pharmacy.

Start planning and prepare to stop. List all your reasons for wanting to stop. Look at the list regularly.

Work out your smoking habits and be prepared to make changes to your routine.

Set a date to stop.





Pick support that suits you. For example, online help, local support programmes, phone support and family and friends.

Plan activities and distractions for when you might feel the need to smoke.

Set goals and reward yourself when you get there.

Keep a record of how much money you are saving and/or how many cigarettes you have avoided smoking since stopping.

STAY POSITIVE and tell yourself that you are going to succeed!

# What to expect when you stop smoking

Nicotine in smoke is addictive. When you stop smoking it takes 3 to 4 days for nicotine to fully leave your body.

Be prepared for the first few days to be among the most difficult. You may feel irritable, restless or have a low mood. You may also find it difficult to concentrate or sleep.

The craving for a cigarette usually only lasts 3 to 5 minutes and will pass. Stay strong! These cravings will reduce.



Some people start smoking again after they quit. If this happens it is important to think about why you started again and learn from it. Then focus on staying positive about trying again. It may take a few tries before you stop smoking for good.



Finding it hard when you first stop is normal but this will improve over time.

# Help to stop smoking

You are 4 times more likely to quit smoking with professional support and medication.

Free NHS stop smoking services are available across Scotland through the Quit Your Way programme and NHS Quit Smoking app.

Your GP or pharmacist can offer help and advice to help you stop. You may be offered medication such as nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) or varenicline.

If you feel it would be helpful, ask your family and friends for support. This can make a big difference.

For more information about support available in your local area:

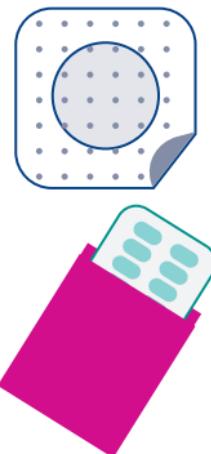
- Visit your **local community pharmacy**.
- Call **Quit Your Way Scotland** for free on **0800 848 484** (Mon-Fri: 8am to 10pm, Sat-Sun: 9am to 5pm).
- Visit [\*\*www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/how-to-stop-smoking/\*\*](http://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/how-to-stop-smoking/).
- Speak to the **Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland Advice Line practitioners**.



# Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)

To help deal with the symptoms of stopping smoking you may be offered nicotine replacement therapy (NRT). This is available for free through the NHS.

NRT comes in different forms such as skin patches, chewing gum, mouth spray and inhalators. It works by slowly reducing the amount of nicotine in your body or delivering a lower dose of nicotine. Without the other harmful chemicals found in cigarette smoke.



Speak to your GP, pharmacist or local stop smoking service about NRT.

If you are pregnant the NHS may recommend that you use NRT alongside behavioural changes to support you to stop smoking.

# Stop smoking medication

## Varenicline

You may be offered a specific stop smoking medication called varenicline. Varenicline reduces your cravings for nicotine and helps manage withdrawal symptoms. It does not contain any nicotine, instead it blocks nicotine's effects in your brain.

It is only available on prescription following an assessment by a healthcare professional. One course of varenicline treatment usually lasts 12 weeks. You will be asked to decide on a date to stop smoking. You will then aim to start taking varenicline 1 to 2 weeks before this date.

Varenicline is available from community pharmacies and medical professionals. Speak to your pharmacist, GP or Smoke-Free Advisor for further information. They will check if varenicline is suitable for you.

# E-cigarettes

E-cigarettes were designed as smoking cessation aids. Most electronic cigarettes (or e-cigarette or vape) contain nicotine, which is highly addictive. They are not available through the NHS.

E-cigarettes appear to be less harmful than smoking tobacco. However, they are not entirely risk-free.

The long-term effects of smoking e-cigarettes are not yet known.

E-cigarettes are not considered safe for children and young people. Professional support, behaviour changes, NRT, and varenicline are the NHS recommended routes to stopping smoking for everyone.



# Myths and Facts



 **MYTH:** Stopping smoking will make you put on weight.

 **FACT:** Smoking affects your appetite. Some people may feel hungrier when they stop smoking. However, you can avoid putting on weight by making sensible, healthy decisions about what you eat and how much exercise you do.

 **MYTH:** I'll feel more stressed if I stop.

 **FACT:** Research has found that non-smokers are less stressed than smokers. Smokers have a higher risk of suffering from anxiety and depression than non-smokers. Smoking may feel like it helps you to relax but you are actually adding physical stress to your body.



**MYTH:** Rolling tobacco and 'light' cigarettes are better for you.



**FACT:** There is no one type of cigarette or tobacco that is better for you than any other.



**MYTH:** Smoking every now and again is harmless.



**FACT:** Every cigarette causes harm.



**MYTH:** Nicotine is the part of smoke that causes cancer.



**FACT:** Nicotine is harmful and highly addictive but does not cause cancer. It is the other chemicals in smoke like carbon monoxide and tar that cause the most harm.

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**text ADVICE to 66777**  
**advice@chss.org.uk**

One in five people in Scotland are affected by chest, heart and stroke conditions or Long Covid. Go to [www.chss.org.uk/supportus](http://www.chss.org.uk/supportus) to find out how you can help us support more people in Scotland.

To give feedback or request alternative formats, email: [health.information@chss.org.uk](mailto:health.information@chss.org.uk)



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