



## AWARENESS

# SMOKING STATS TO CONSIDER

Smoking and the use of tobacco have many negative effects on health. In 2021, the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported 1.3 billion tobacco smokers worldwide – around 8 million of these smokers die annually.

On average, smokers die 10 years earlier than non-smokers, and approximately 1.2 million tobacco-related deaths result from second-hand smoke.

Despite these alarming figures and health risks, the WHO says “the tobacco epidemic” continues to be “the biggest public health threat the world has ever faced”.

### Health effects of smoking

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says smoking is the leading cause of preventable death, causing various diseases such as cancers, heart and lung disease, stroke, diabetes, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, including chronic bronchitis.

### Tips to quit

Quitting can result in many health benefits and reduce the likelihood of disease. The American Cancer Society lists these effects observed within minutes of stopping:

*20 minutes:* heart rate and blood pressure drop.

*2 – 12 weeks:* circulation and lung function improve.

*Within 12 months:* shortness of breath and coughing decrease.

*1 – 2 years:* heart attack risk drops dramatically.

*5 – 10 years:* mouth, throat, and larynx cancer risk is halved, and stroke risk decreases.

*10 – 15 years:* lung cancer risk is halved, bladder and kidney cancer risks decrease, and coronary heart disease risk is almost that of non-smokers.

When you quit, it's vital to use methods that can help ease nicotine cravings and the urge to smoke. Various strategies may help, including these tips from WebMD:

1. **Tame cravings** with nicotine replacements (such as nicotine gum and patches), and gradually reduce your nicotine intake.
2. **Avoid smoking triggers** that may make quitting harder (e.g. alcohol or social settings amongst other smokers). Learn your triggers and find ways to limit and manage urges that may arise.
3. **Use prescription medication** specifically formulated to ease cravings. These may help you with coping with the withdrawals and possible mood swings.
4. **Replace smoking with healthy habits.** Exercise or partake in activities that help distract from smoking.

If needed, seek professional support to aid your journey to be nicotine-free.