



gems

Government Employees
Medical Scheme

Smoking



Facts about smoking	1
Smoking and your body	2
Dangers of passive smoking	5
Why is quitting so difficult?	6

SMOKING

FACTS ABOUT SMOKING

- Research indicates that every cigarette you smoke shortens your life by 11 minutes.
- Research also shows that 50% of smokers will be killed by cigarettes.
- Filters do not remove enough tar to make cigarettes less dangerous.
- Other chemicals added to tobacco also cause cancer.
- A chemical similar to rocket fuel helps keep the tip of the cigarette burning at an extremely hot temperature.
- Ammonia is added to cigarettes to enhance nicotine absorption into your lungs. This causes your brain to get a higher dose of nicotine with each puff. Other highly toxic chemicals that are added to cigarettes include: cadmium, benzene, formaldehyde, nickel, lead, acetone and pyridine. There are over 4000 chemicals and toxins in a cigarette altogether.
- A non-smoker working in a smoke-filled room for eight hours will breathe as many cancer-causing chemicals as if he/she had smoked 36 cigarettes.



SMOKING AND YOUR BODY

Smoking is harmful to your entire body.

Here are a few effects of smoking:

Skin

- Premature skin aging causes acne
- Increased risk of psoriasis

Eyes

- Four times the risk of blindness

Mouth

- Four times the risk of oral cancer
- Increased risk of gum disease
- Causes halitosis and poor sense of taste

Throat and voice box

- Increased risk of cancer of the pharynx, larynx and oesophagus

Lungs

- Causes lung cancer
- Causes complications with emphysema, asthma and bronchitis

Liver

- Increased risk of liver cancer

Bladder

- Increased risk of bladder cancer

Colon and rectum

- Increased risk of colorectal cancer

Limbs

- Causes complications in peripheral vascular disease
- Five times the risk of gangrene and subsequent amputation

Bones and muscles

- Weakens bones, muscles, tendons and ligaments
- Causes early onset of osteoporosis
- Causes slow healing of fractures and wounds, increases injury rate

Brain

- Doubled risk of a stroke
- Degenerates mental function

Ears

- Increased frequency of middle ear infection



Nose

- Increased risk of cancer in nasal cavities and sinus
- Causes poor sense of smell

Kidneys

- Increased risk of kidney cancer

Pancreas

- Increased risk of pancreatic cancer

Stomach

- Increased risk of stomach cancer and peptic ulcer

Reproductive

- Causes infertility, erectile dysfunction, impotence, increased risk of cervical cancer, early menopause, miscarriage, premature birth and stillborn birth

Blood

- Increased risk of Leukemia

Immune system

- Increased rate of infections e.g. cold and flu

Heart

- Three times the risk of heart disease and heart attack

Endocrine system

- Causes abnormal distribution of body fat

DANGERS OF PASSIVE SMOKING

Passive smoking is a combination of inhaling smoke released from the tip of a burning cigarette as well as inhaling smoke that has been exhaled by a smoker.

Passive smoking is as harmful as first-hand smoke.

These are a few health factors involved in passive smoking:

Risks for children:

- SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).
- Increased risk of bronchitis, pneumonia, throat and middle ear infections.
- Frequent infections such as colds, allergies, middle ear infections, and 'glue ear', which is the most common cause of deafness in children.

Risks for adults:

- Eye irritation, headache, nasal discomfort and sneezing, cough and sore throat, nausea and dizziness, increased heart rate and blood pressure.
- Exposure to second-hand smoke while pregnant is linked to miscarriage, low birth weight and stillborn births.
- Long-term passive smoking causes asthma, heart disease, lung cancer and tooth decay.
- Exposure to second-hand smoke for as little as 30 minutes can increase a non-smoker's risk of heart disease by 30%.
- Passive smoking is linked to infertility and impotence.
- Passive smoking is very harmful to a person suffering from asthma, since it causes the lungs to produce more mucus than normal and damages the cilia (tiny hair-like structures that keep the airway free of dust and mucus).
- Passive smoking causes pneumonia, sinus infection and impaired lung function.

WHY IS QUITTING SO DIFFICULT?

Nicotine addiction and withdrawal symptoms

Nicotine is a highly addictive drug, plus its absorption into the body is enhanced by means of additional chemicals in the cigarette, causing an even greater addiction. The withdrawal symptoms that happen when a smoker tries to stop are responsible for many smokers failing to quit.

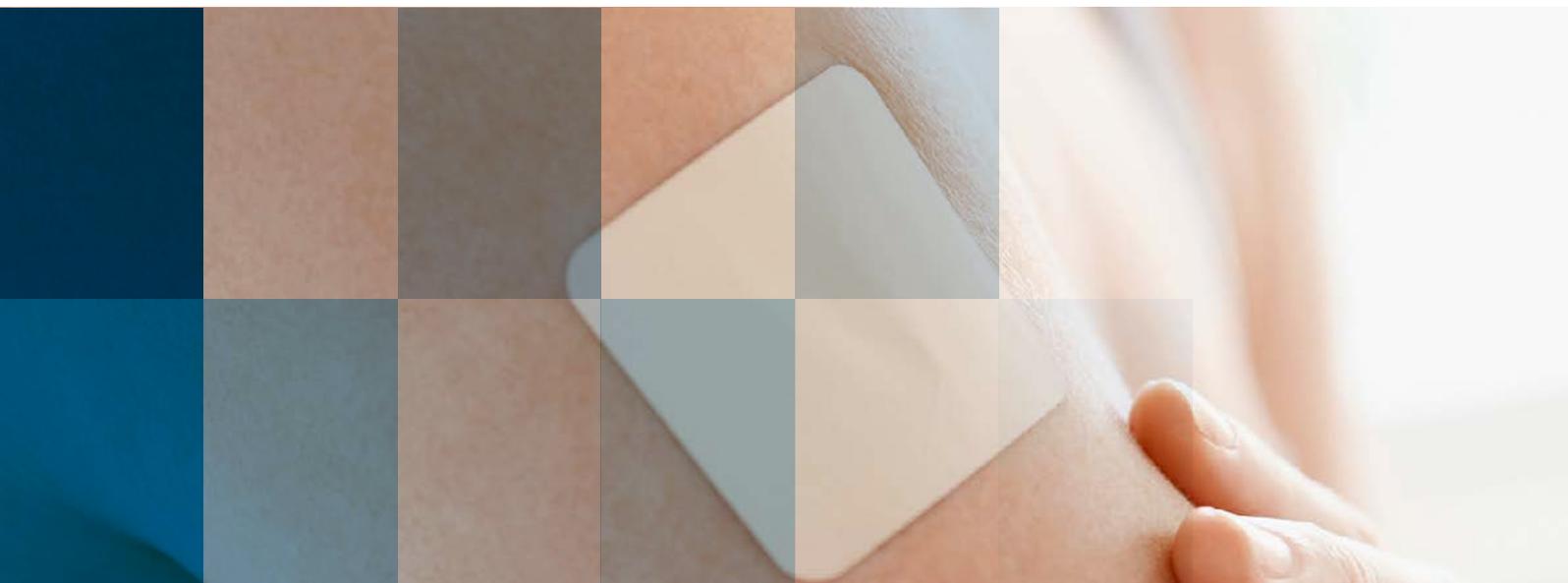
When trying to quit, it may be helpful to be aware of the symptoms that may occur, and also to remember that these symptoms are temporary (will not last for long). The withdrawal symptoms that you will most likely experience are: irritability or anxiety, depression, restlessness, difficulty concentrating, increased appetite, light-headedness, insomnia, tobacco cravings, headaches, fatigue, digestive disturbances etc.

Quitting is possible – and the sooner the better

If you want to quit smoking, but don't know where to start, a healthcare provider or support group may be able to assist.

Here are some steps you can take:

- Define your smoking pattern – when do you smoke, and why?
- Make a resolute decision to quit. Set a date and throw away all your tobacco, ashtrays and lighters.
- Take note of times when you especially want to smoke and prepare for those times by having some alternative activity which can distract your mind from craving smoking. Aids like nicotine gum can be used.
- Practice ways of saying no when offered a cigarette. Discuss your decision to quit with your friends and family and ask them to support you.



Visit www.gems.gov.za for more information
or call us on **0860 00 4367**