

# How smoking affects your body

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How Smoking Affects Your Body There's hardly a part of the human body that's not affected by the chemicals in the cigarettes you smoke. Let's take a tour of your body to look at how smoking affects it. Starting at the Top As a smoker, you're at risk for cancer of the mouth. Tobacco smoke can also cause gum disease, tooth decay and bad breath. The teeth become unsightly and yellow. Smokers may experience frequent headaches. And lack of oxygen and narrowed blood vessels to the brain can lead to strokes. Lungs and Bronchi

Moving down to your chest, smoke passes through the bronchi, or breathing tubes. Hydrogen cyanide and other chemicals in the smoke attack the lining of the bronchi, inflaming them and causing that chronic smoker's cough. Because the bronchi are weakened, you're more likely to get bronchial infections. Mucus secretion in your lungs is impaired, also leading to chronic coughing. Smokers are 10 times as likely to get lung cancer and emphysema as nonsmokers. Smoking and the Heart The effects of smoking on your heart are devastating.

Nicotine raises blood pressure and makes the blood clot more easily. Carbon monoxide robs the blood of oxygen and leads to the development of cholesterol deposits on the artery walls. All of these effects add up to an increased risk of heart attack. In addition, the poor circulation resulting from cholesterol deposits can cause strokes, loss of circulation in fingers and toes and impotence. Smoking and the Body's Organs The digestive system is also affected. The tars in smoke can trigger cancer of the esophagus and throat.

Smoking causes increased stomach acid secretion, leading to heartburn and ulcers. Smokers have higher rates of deadly pancreatic cancer. Many of the carcinogens from cigarettes are excreted in the urine where their presence can cause bladder cancer, which is often fatal. High blood pressure from smoking can damage the kidneys. The Results Thehealtheffects of smoking have results we can measure. Forty percent of men who are heavy smokers will die before they reach retirement age, as compared to only 18 percent of nonsmokers.

Women who smoke face an increased risk of cervical cancer, and pregnant women who smoke take a chance with the health of their unborn babies. But the good news is that when you quit smoking your body begins to repair itself. Ten years after you quit, your body has repaired most of the damage smoking caused. Those who wait until cancer or emphysema has set in aren't so lucky—these conditions are usually fatal. It's one more reason to take the big step and quit now.