

The QUIT Guide

# WOMEN AND SMOKING



# WOMEN AND SMOKING

Most women know that smoking can cause lung cancer, heart disease and premature death. But what you may not know is that women, regardless of their age, can be harmed by smoking in so many other ways.

Smoking can wreak havoc on a woman's appearance, causing a sallow complexion and premature ageing, as well as contributing to infertility, early menopause,<sup>1</sup> and osteoporosis.<sup>2</sup>

Women who smoke during pregnancy endanger not only themselves, but their babies too.<sup>3</sup> Mothers who smoke around their children also put their kids' health at risk.<sup>3</sup>

The good news is that it is never too late to become smokefree and join the thousands of women who have quit smoking to improve their health. Huge numbers of women quit each day – you can do it too. The sooner you do it, the greater the benefit.

This guide will help you better understand why smoking is particularly bad for women and show you the health, lifestyle and cosmetic benefits to quitting smoking whatever your age.

# TEENAGERS

Smoking might seem exciting and cool but the reality is that it harms your body and your health from the first puff you take.

## SKIN

Tobacco smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals<sup>4</sup> and can both dehydrate and deprive your skin of oxygen.<sup>5</sup> Some research shows that the damaging effects of cigarette smoke on the skin may start earlier than previously thought.<sup>6</sup> Over the years, if you continue smoking your face is more likely to develop wrinkles, crow's feet, all-round bad texture and can appear a washed-out yellow-grey colour.<sup>5</sup>

One of the best things you can do to help maintain a beautiful complexion is to stop smoking. Quit and you could see real benefits - skin can become smoother and brighter.<sup>7</sup>

## HAIR

Did you know that smoking can potentially lead to baldness and premature grey hair. Certain chemicals in smoke break down in hair cells, which leads to hair damage.<sup>8</sup> Conversely, quitting can help to restore the flow of nutrients to the hair, improving nourishment and giving you back a healthy shine.

## BREATH

Smoking stains your teeth and makes them yellow.<sup>9</sup> It leaves an unpleasant smell that lingers in the mouth and breath – smoking is one of the major causes of bad breath.

## QUITTING WILL STOP YOU STINKING.

### HEALTH

Smoking reduces fitness and sporting performance.<sup>10</sup> If you smoke it is likely that you aren't going to be able to run as fast or as far as your smoke-free team mates. A smoker's heart has to work much harder than that of a non-smoker so, in competition, your body wastes a lot more energy just trying to keep up with the non-smokers.<sup>10</sup>

Quitting smoking should enable you to work out much better than you could before and help you obtain optimum fitness.

### PERIODS AND SEXUAL HEALTH

Quitting smoking could ease the agony of painful periods. Girls and women who smoke may be more likely to have painful and irregular periods.<sup>3</sup> Smoking can be risky for girls using the combined oral contraceptive pill as it may increase the chance of the pill failing.<sup>3</sup> It can also cause breakthrough bleeding.<sup>11</sup>

For help ring Quitline 0800 00 22 00 or visit [www.quitbecause.org.uk](http://www.quitbecause.org.uk)

**Ask yourself...is smoking really worth it?**



# 20+

## SKIN

Smoking can age you by 10 years or more!<sup>5</sup> Your complexion is more likely to have a yellow-grey pallor and lines on the cheeks and lower jaw. The more a person smokes the greater the risk of premature wrinkling.<sup>5</sup>

If you quit now your skin should become healthier making you feel and look better.

## PERIODS AND SEXUAL HEALTH

Although the following list might seem grim, don't despair - you can see significant benefits by stopping smoking.

- Risk of cervical cancer increases two-fold if you are a smoker.<sup>12</sup>
- More than five-times greater risk of developing genital warts.<sup>13</sup>
- Greater chance of menstrual irregularities.<sup>14</sup>
- Higher combined contraceptive pill failure rate<sup>3</sup> and breakthrough bleeding.<sup>11</sup>
- Reduced chance of 10-40% per cycle, if you want to have a baby (more details in pregnancy section).<sup>12,15</sup>

The good news is that it's not too late to stop smoking. You will quickly notice all the benefits. To find the best way for you to quit ring **Quitline 0800 00 22 00.**

## FITNESS

It is not only the skin that ages prematurely; it is a well-known fact that smoking reduces physical fitness.<sup>10</sup> Smoking is bad for physical fitness even if you think you are fit. It lowers physical endurance and causes increased fatigue both during and after exercise.<sup>10</sup>

**Quit and you will have much more energy!**



# 30+

## SKIN

Smokers in their thirties may already be showing signs of wrinkles, lines and crow's feet. Your complexion may already appear dull and sallow. This is because continuous exposure to cigarette heat causes premature skin ageing.<sup>6</sup>

Quitting smoking will help to improve your skin's appearance. After one month of being smokefree your face will start to lose its greyish pallor and become less wrinkled.<sup>7</sup>

Prolonged smoking causes discolouration of the fingers and fingernails on the hand used to hold cigarettes.<sup>5</sup>

## HEALTH

Many women start thinking about a family in their thirties. A good step you can take to achieve this is to stop smoking (more details in pregnancy section).

## FITNESS

Many women fear they will put on weight if they quit smoking. But by eating healthily and increasing activity, weight gain should not be a serious problem.

**The extra energy you get from quitting smoking will help make you fitter so you can spend more time doing the things you enjoy.**



# 40+

## SKIN

Smokers in their 40s may have facial wrinkling and could develop hollow cheeks through repeated sucking on cigarettes. Your skin can be dry, leathery and etched with tiny lines, especially around the lips and eyes.<sup>5</sup>

The good news is that quitting smoking helps to prevent them getting worse. And it will improve the texture of your facial skin and make it look brighter and less wrinkled.<sup>7</sup>

## TEETH

Your teeth may not be as white as they could be. Cigarette smoke interferes with the mouth's chemistry, creating a build-up of plaque on the teeth and yellow discolouration. Smokers are one and a half times more likely to lose their teeth.<sup>9</sup>

Once you quit a dentist can remove the stains on your teeth and your gums should improve.<sup>16</sup>

## HEALTH

Smokers are more likely to store fat around the waist and upper body, rather than around the hips. This means smokers are more likely to have a higher waist-to-hip ratio which is associated with a much higher risk of developing diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, gall bladder problems and cancer of the womb and breast.<sup>5</sup>

## SMOKING DRAINS A LOT OF YOUR BODY'S ENERGY RESERVES.

Quitting means the cells in your body will receive more oxygen, which in turn should help you feel more energised and less sluggish. You will feel healthier and not have to worry about the damage you are doing to your body by smoking.

If you quit now you still have time to repair the damage to your health that you have already done and to reduce your risk of a heart attack to that of someone who has never smoked.<sup>7</sup>



# 50+

By stopping smoking now you could help to avoid many of the health risks you face by continuing to smoke.

If you smoke you are not going to be as active as non-smoking friends of the same age.

If you quit, within a few hours your circulation will improve and can help to give you more energy, and feel less breathless. After 3-9 months you may notice a reduction in coughing and wheezing.<sup>7</sup>

## MENOPAUSE

The good news is you will lessen the length and severity of menopausal symptoms if you stop smoking.<sup>1</sup>

## IF YOU QUIT YOU REDUCE YOUR CHANCES OF:-

- Early menopause (smokers can start up to 2 years earlier than non-smokers).<sup>1</sup>
- Osteoporosis which causes thin and weak bones which break easily.<sup>17</sup>
- Incontinence which increases two fold if you are a smoker.<sup>18</sup>

## HUGE BENEFITS

Your body will repair itself over time. After 48 hours the decline in lung function and excess risk of lung cancer halts. A year on and your risk of a heart attack drops to half that of a smoker, while after 15 years your risk of a heart attack is no more than that of a lifelong non-smoker.<sup>7</sup>

**If you would like to chat in confidence to someone about the best way for you to quit, ring Quitline 0800 00 22 00 for friendly help and advice.**



# 60+

If you quit smoking now you can still make a significant improvement to your health, day-to-day fitness and appearance.

**You are less likely to die from lung cancer.**

Lung cancer is the second most common form of cancer in the UK after breast cancer and the number of women with lung cancer has been increasing. Smoking and passive smoking cause nine out of ten lung cancers. **The sooner you stop smoking, the less likely you are to get lung cancer.**

**Stopping smoking can halt or reverse damage to the eyes, depending on the severity and type of disease.<sup>19</sup>**

**You are less likely to become deaf if you quit.**

Smokers can lose their hearing earlier than non-smokers and are more susceptible to hearing loss caused by ear infections or loud noise.<sup>9</sup>

**You are less likely to have a heart attack.**

Women who smoke will increase their risk of heart attack no matter what their age.<sup>21</sup> Stopping smoking is urgent but it's never too late to stop. After the age of 35-40 every year of continued smoking loses 3 months of life expectancy.<sup>7</sup>

**So stopping today makes a difference.**

**You are less likely to break your hip.**

There is conclusive evidence that smoking causes low bone density in postmenopausal women (more details in fifties section).<sup>2</sup>

**You are less likely to develop breast cancer.**

Postmenopausal women who smoke one or more packs of cigarettes a day are five times more likely to develop breast cancer than others who do not smoke.<sup>11</sup>

**You'll live longer.**

Adults who die of a smoking-related disease lose an average of 13-14.5 years of life.<sup>22</sup> Women who stop smoking can get many of those years back—improving the chances that you will live to enjoy your grandchildren and even great grandchildren.



# SMOKING AND PREGNANCY

## TRYING TO CONCEIVE?

Research shows that cigarette smoking is harmful to a woman's ovaries. It can cause a woman's eggs to be more prone to genetic abnormality and increase the risk of spontaneous miscarriage and ectopic pregnancy.<sup>3</sup>

Women who smoke take longer to conceive. Among smokers, the chances of conceiving fall by up to 40 per cent per cycle.<sup>15</sup> The more cigarettes you smoke the longer it takes to become pregnant. Just one cigarette a day can have a significant impact.

Stopping smoking can reduce the risk of erectile dysfunction and may improve sexual potency.<sup>3</sup>

## RISKS YOU CAN LESSEN IF YOU QUIT SMOKING

- Harming ovaries
- genetic abnormalities
- miscarriages
- ectopic pregnancy<sup>3</sup>
- IVF attempts.<sup>23,24</sup>

Stopping smoking increases the success of fertility treatment.

There is a reduction in the likelihood of the embryo implanting compared to non-smokers, and nearly twice as many IVF attempts may be

required to conceive in smokers.<sup>23,24</sup> Breathing in secondary smoke can cause nearly as much harm as a woman smoking herself.<sup>25</sup>

So if you want a family it is important that both you and your partner quit smoking. It often helps if you stop together so you can support each other, especially at the difficult times. Smokers who get support from partners and other people are more likely to successfully quit.<sup>26</sup>

## PREGNANCY

Like every mum-to-be you want to have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby. The best way to ensure this is not to smoke.

Smoking when you are pregnant harms you and it harms your baby.

# SMOKING AND PREGNANCY

continued

## HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN AVOID IF YOU QUIT SMOKING

- Poisonous chemicals in cigarette smoke passing through your body into your baby.
- Cigarette smoke disrupting the flow of blood to your baby.<sup>27</sup>
- Prenatal passive smoking influences placental and fetal development, reduces birth weight, and affects lung and brain development.
- A smaller, weaker baby that will be more prone to infections and illness.
- An increased risk of breathlessness and wheezing in young babies.<sup>29</sup>
- Increased risk of congenital defects such as cleft lip and/or palate or limb deformities.<sup>30,31</sup>

Don't despair you can get one-to-one telephone counselling support throughout your pregnancy Ring the NHS Pregnancy Smoking Helpline NOW: 0800 169 9 169.

The good news is that stopping smoking at any stage of pregnancy is beneficial. The moment you quit you start increasing your chances of a healthier pregnancy and a healthier baby. You will have more energy, be able to cope better with pregnancy, and know you are doing the best for your unborn baby.

## PASSIVE SMOKING

Passive smoking is equally dangerous for your unborn baby. If your family or friends smoke near you, you will breathe in harmful gases and chemicals and pass them onto your baby.

Your partner, family and friends can all help you during your pregnancy by not smoking around you. They might even want to quit – advise them to call QUIT on 0800 00 22 00 for friendly one-to-one support.

# MAKING YOUR HOME SMOKEFREE

## A SMOKEFREE HOME IS A HEALTHY HOME

Children growing up in a smoke free home are less likely to catch colds, coughs and bugs. And you will reduce the risk of serious problems like cot death, asthma, chest infections, and glue ear.<sup>3</sup>

It is not only your children who will benefit from a smoke free home. You and your partner will feel healthier, should have fewer coughs and colds, and have more energy to run around and play with your children.

**To find out more about quitting and making your home smokefree call the Quitline 0800 00 22 00 and speak to a QUIT counsellor.**

# THANKS TO

**Gay Sutherland**, Research Psychologist at the Tobacco Research Unit, King's College London University and Hon. Consultant Clinical Psychologist at the South London & Maudsley NHS Trust Smoking Cessation Clinic.

**Robert West**, Professor of Health Psychology and Director of Tobacco Studies at the Cancer Research UK Health Behaviour Unit, University College London.

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For more information about  
QUIT, please contact us at:

QUIT, 211 Old Street,  
London EC1V 9NR

Tel: 020 7251 1551  
Fax: 020 7251 1661  
Email: [info@quit.org.uk](mailto:info@quit.org.uk)

Quitline: 0800 00 22 00  
Asian Quitline: 0800 00 22 66  
Email: [stopsmoking@quit.org.uk](mailto:stopsmoking@quit.org.uk)  
Website: [www.quit.org.uk](http://www.quit.org.uk)

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