



BENEFITS FROM QUITTING TOBACCO USE

“Smoking cessation has major and immediate health benefits for men and women of all ages.”
– U.S. Surgeon General¹

Despite reductions in smoking prevalence achieved since the first Surgeon General’s report on the consequences of smoking in 1964, smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States.² More than 43 million Americans and more than 1.2 billion people worldwide continue to use tobacco.³ Smoking accounts for over 400,000 deaths in the United States each year, and is a major risk factor for the four leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, stroke, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.⁴

Numerous studies have demonstrated that quitting smoking improves health and the quality of life. Smoking cessation has well-documented health benefits including increased longevity and decreased morbidity and mortality from coronary artery disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, peptic ulcer disease, and cancer. Pregnant women who stop smoking can increase their chances of giving birth to healthy babies as well as improve their own health. Smokers who quit also improve the health of those around them by reducing their exposure to secondhand smoke.

Smokeless tobacco refers to snuff and chewing tobacco. In 2005, 2.5 percent of adults and eight percent of high school students used smokeless tobacco, with 13.6 percent of high school boys and 2.2 percent of high school girls reporting current smokeless tobacco use.⁵ In 2004, 2.8 percent of middle school kids used smokeless tobacco, with 3.8 percent of middle school boys and 1.9 percent of middle school girls reporting current smokeless tobacco use.⁶ Smokeless tobacco is addictive and is associated with an increased risk of oral diseases, including cancer, and cardiovascular diseases.⁷ Effective interventions to quit using smokeless tobacco exist, including over-the-counter nicotine replacement therapies, prescription drugs, and counseling.⁸

Benefits of Smoking Cessation

Smoking cessation improves longevity. Data obtained from the U.S. National Health Interview Survey and U.S. death records found increases in life expectancy among those who quit smoking, even those who quit later in life. The study found:

- Although life expectancy was shortened by more than 10 years among current smokers compared to never smokers, adults who quit smoking before the age of 40 regained almost all of those lost years.
- Smokers who quit between the ages of 35 to 44 gained 9 years of life.
- Smokers who quit between the ages of 45 to 54 gained 6 years of life.
- Smokers who quit between the ages of 55 to 64 gained 4 years of life.⁹

Smoking cessation reduces morbidity and mortality from respiratory disease. Respiratory disease morbidity and mortality is known to decrease after smoking cessation, mediated through a reduced decline in forced expiratory volume in one second (FEV₁), a measure of lung function, even among subjects with established COPD.¹⁰

Smoking cessation reduces tobacco-related cancer risk. Smoking cessation is well known to reduce cancer risk, although there is a considerable time lag before decreases in cancer incidence are seen.¹¹ According to a study done at Oxford University and supported by the British Heart Foundation and the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, it has been estimated that quitting smoking before 35 years of age is associated with a greater than 90 percent reduction in tobacco-attributable cancer risk.¹² The risk of lung cancer in individuals who use to smoke decreases progressively with the number of years of abstinence, but always remains higher than that of those who have never smoked.¹³

Smoking cessation reduces the risk of stroke. The Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion in Washington, DC asserts that smoking cessation reduces the risk of both stroke and brain hemorrhage.¹⁴ According to the Nurses' Health Study, the risk of suffering a stroke among female cigarette smokers declines soon after cessation, and the benefits are independent of the age at starting and the number of cigarettes smoked per day.¹⁵ The Framingham Study, involving both men and women, suggests that most of the benefit of quitting occurs within 5 years following cessation.¹⁶

Smoking cessation reduces the risk of coronary artery disease (CAD). A study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* demonstrated that the risk of developing coronary artery disease could be reduced by one-half after one year of abstinence from smoking. After two years, the risk of CAD equals that of people who have never smoked.¹⁷ Among men who have quit smoking for at least five years, mortality from CAD decreases to almost the level of subjects who have never smoked.¹⁸ In the Nurses' Health Study, subjects who smoked in the past had a 24 percent reduction in cardiovascular disease mortality after two years of smoking cessation. Furthermore, after 10 to 14 years of smoking cessation, the adverse effects on mortality from CAD resolve completely.¹⁹

Smoking cessation reduces the risk of giving birth to low birth-weight babies. The Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion asserts that women who stop smoking prior to starting their second trimester of pregnancy reduce their risk of having a low birth-weight baby to that of non-smoking women.²⁰

Smoking cessation improves symptoms of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). The Lung Health Study, a project supported by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, showed that smoking cessation results in a significant reduction in the prevalence of cough, sputum production, wheezing, and shortness of breath in individuals with COPD. The beneficial effects in the reduction of the prevalence of chronic cough from smoking cessation occur within the first year of stopping smoking.²¹

Smoking cessation reduces the risk of peptic ulcer disease (PUD). Individuals who smoke are more prone to develop ulcers in the stomach and small intestine, and their ulcers tend to be more severe and occur more often than those in non-smokers. Smokers with PUD who stop smoking experience an improvement in their disease in comparison to those who continue to smoke.²²

Smoking cessation decreases the risk of hip fracture. A study done at Harvard University and supported by the National Institutes of Health demonstrated that there is a 17 percent increased risk of hip fracture in smokers compared with non-smokers at age 60 years. Smoking cessation leads to a decline in this risk. The benefits of cessation do not occur until ten or more years following cessation and are partly explained by weight gain accompanying smoking cessation.²³ Hip fractures contribute significantly to morbidity and mortality in the elderly.

Timeline of Quitting Benefits²⁴

At 20 minutes after last cigarette: blood pressure and pulse rate drops; body temperature rises toward normal.

At 12 hours after quitting: carbon monoxide level in blood drops to normal; oxygen level rises to normal.

After 2 weeks to 3 months: circulation improves; walking becomes easier; lung function improves; heart attack risk decreases.

After 1 to 9 months: decrease in coughing, sinus congestion, fatigue, shortness of breath.

After 1 year: excess risk of coronary heart disease is decreased to half that of a smoker.

After 5 to 15 years: stroke risk is reduced to that of people who have never smoked.

After 10 years: risk of lung cancer drops to as little as one-half that of continuing smokers; risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, kidney, and pancreas decreases; risk of ulcer decreases.

After 15 years: risk of coronary heart disease is now similar to that of people who have never smoked; risk of death returns to nearly the level of people who have never smoked.

Benefits From Quitting Smokeless Tobacco Use

Cessation of smokeless tobacco use decreases the risk of diseases and health problems associated with its use, including the following:

- *Oral and Nasal Cancer* - oral cancer at the site where the tobacco is usually placed (inside the lip, under the cheek or tongue) and nasal cancer in nasal snuff users
- *Erythroplasia* - red patches in the mouth that are likely to develop into cancer
- *Leukoplakia* - white plaques in the mouth that can be pre-malignant
- *Gingivitis & Gingival Recession*- inflammation of the gums and recession of the gum line
- *Staining of the teeth, Tooth loss and Halitosis* (bad breath)
- *High cholesterol*
- *High blood pressure and Hypertension*
- *Low blood potassium* (leading to irregular heart rhythms)
- *Chest pain*
- *Heart attack*
- *Stroke.*²⁵

It is firmly established that any smoker or other user of tobacco products is harming their body and facing enormous health risks, including possible premature death. On the other hand, users who successfully quit immediately start to improve their health and dramatically increase their chances of leading longer and healthier lives.

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, February 7, 2013 / Lorna Schmidt

More information is available at

http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/fact_sheets/policies/cessation/.

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