



Smoking and your lungs

Why it's never too late to give up

Giving up smoking is never easy, but it's the most important thing you can do to look after your health. If you have a lung condition, you might feel that you have already damaged your lungs and that there is little point in giving up. In fact, it is never too late to quit smoking, and giving up could help you to feel a lot better.

If you have a lung condition such as COPD, you are more likely to feel increasingly breathless if you smoke, or are exposed to second-hand smoke. Giving up smoking is the most important thing you can do to stop your condition getting worse. By quitting, you can significantly slow down the speed at which you are losing lung function, and improve your quality of life, and that of those around you. This information sheet explains the benefits of giving up smoking and the steps you can take to quit, helping you improve your health and quality of life for the future.

Why am I addicted to smoking?

Cigarettes contain a substance called **nicotine**, which easily gets into your brain and creates an addiction or 'craving'. It is the falling level of nicotine in the brain that creates the 'craving' to smoke. Nicotine is highly addictive, and controlling these cravings is key to being able to 'kick the habit'. Giving up can be hard, but there are lots of people who can help you to quit, and plenty of reasons to do it!

Cigarettes contain many other harmful substances. Find out more about how smoking affects your lungs and the link between smoking and lung disease at www.blf.org.uk/page/smoking

Why should I quit?

Even if you already have a lung condition, quitting smoking is still the most important thing you can do to help manage your condition and improve your quality of life. There are lots of different reasons why it's worth trying to give up.

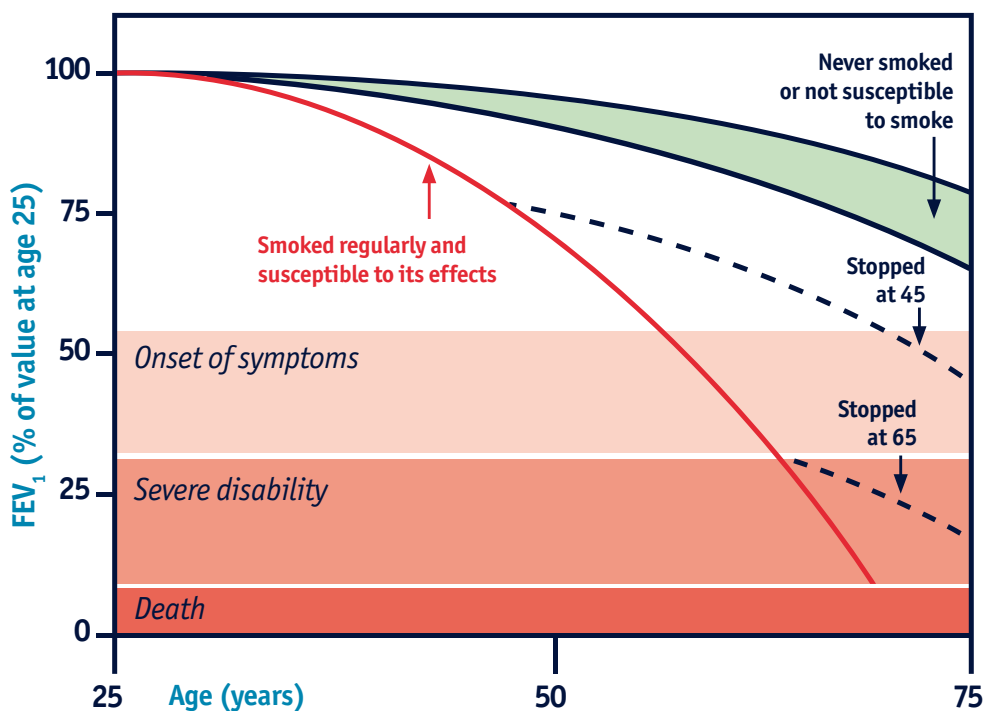
Stopping smoking will lower your risk of developing other conditions and, if you have COPD, the rate at which your lungs get worse will slow down. By quitting, you could live longer, feel better and have more money to spend on the things you like doing.

If you have a lung condition such as COPD, you might have some or all of these symptoms:

- difficulty breathing, especially when physically active
- a cough, which often produces mucous
- frequent chest infections

- wheezing

Quitting smoking will help you cope with these symptoms and is the most important thing you can do to prevent your condition getting worse. Smoking increases the speed at which you lose lung function. If you stop smoking, the rate at which your lungs get worse can improve. Your lung function will be better if you give up, even after the age of 65 (see table).



Reproduced from The natural history of chronic airflow obstruction [C Fletcher, R Peto, BMJ, 1977;1:1645-1648] with permission from BMJ Publishing Group Ltd

What is FEV1?

An FEV1 score shows how much air you can expel from the lungs in the first second of breathing out. Here, it is shown as a percentage of the normal level for a person aged 25. FEV1 is measured by a spirometry test and can help diagnose COPD, or tell how severe it is.

What are the other benefits of giving up smoking?

By quitting smoking, you will reduce your risk of getting smoking-related lung cancer and of having a heart attack. You will also have better mental health in the long term. Studies have shown that if you stop smoking at 60, your life expectancy can increase by three years. Stopping at 30 increases life expectancy by 10 years. And it is not only your health that will improve if you give up smoking, but also the health of your friends and family. Research evidence shows that second-hand smoke can lead to the development of asthma in young children. It can also trigger asthma symptoms in both adults and children. Giving up smoking will mean:

- Your children or young members of your family are less likely to develop asthma and other respiratory conditions.
- Children with non-smoke-induced asthma can control their symptoms better.
- You are more likely to have a healthy pregnancy and baby.
- The effect of second-hand smoke on your friends and work colleagues is much less.

There are also **financial benefits** to giving up smoking. If you smoke 20 cigarettes a day, you could save around £50 a week by stopping. That's a saving of more than £220 every month! Giving up smoking could also help you to reduce your insurance costs, as smokers can pay up to four times the amount a non-smoker pays for life insurance.

If you smoke 20 cigarettes a day, giving up could save you more than £220 every month – or £2,640 a year!

How can I quit?

Being prepared is very important when you quit smoking. These tips might help:

- Write down why you smoke and why you want to give up.
- Pick a date to give up and stick to it.
- Get rid of everything in your home or workplace that reminds you of smoking.
- Tell everyone you are giving up and ask for their help and support.
- Call yourself a non-smoker.
- Think about the possible withdrawal symptoms and how you will cope.
- Write down how much money you will save. Plan what you will do with it.
- Be prepared to slip up – put it down to experience and start again.

If you find yourself thinking about having a cigarette, remember the 4 “D”s*:

- Distract yourself by doing something to keep busy.
- Drink a soft drink, sipping it slowly.
- Delay picking up the cigarette - the need will pass.
- Deep breathing will help you fight the urge.

*Adapted from The Royal College of Psychiatrists

It's also essential to **get support**. Changing any long-term habit, whether it is what you eat and drink, how much exercise you do or whether you smoke, can be hard. Getting support from friends, family and professionals is very important. Research shows that people who use nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and stop smoking services are four times more likely to succeed compared with those who don't.

Nicotine replacement therapy

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) comes in lots of different forms and can help reduce the symptoms of giving up smoking. Examples include patches, gum and mouth sprays, which all release nicotine into your bloodstream without you needing to smoke. NRT helps you to overcome nicotine cravings, and can increase your chance giving up smoking for good. But it's important to remember that you will still need to use some willpower.

Stop smoking medications

As well as NRT, there are two medications available on the NHS to help smokers stop smoking: varenicline (Champix) and bupropion (Zyban). Studies have shown that both have high success rates in helping people give up, but some will power is still essential to kick the habit. These medications can cause a number of side effects. For more information and advice on NRT or stop smoking medications speak to your GP, pharmacist or a smoking cessation nurse.

There are lots of organisations that provide excellent support to help you give up smoking, and your GP or local pharmacy may also provide useful information and support services. Here is a list of useful contact details:

National stop-smoking helplines and websites

Calls to these helplines are free from a landline, but not from a mobile phone.

England

0800 022 4 332

Lines are open daily, from 7am to 11pm, with specialist advisers available from 10am to 1pm.

www.smokefree.nhs.uk

Scotland

0800 84 84 84

Lines are open daily, from 12 midday to 12 midnight.

www.canstopsmoking.com

Wales

0800 085 2219

Lines are open daily, from 12 midday to 12 midnight.

www.stopsmokingwales.com

Northern Ireland

0800 85 85 85

Lines are open daily, from 12 midday to 7pm.

www.spacetobreathe.org.uk

Quitline®

0800 00 22 00

Lines are open daily, from 9am to 9pm.

www.quit.org.uk

QUIT also has helplines offering support in different languages:

Arabic 0800 16 91 300 Saturdays 1pm to 9pm

Bengali 0800 00 22 44 Mondays 1pm to 9pm

Gujarati 0800 00 22 55 Tuesdays 1pm to 9pm

Hindi 0800 00 22 66 Wednesdays 1pm to 9pm

Punjabi 0800 00 22 77 Thursdays 1pm to 9pm

Urdu 0800 00 22 88 Sundays 1pm to 9pm

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH)

www.ash.org.uk

www.ashscotland.org.uk

www.ashwales.org.uk

Want 2 Stop – Northern Ireland

Provides information on stopping smoking and quit kits.

0808 812 8008

How quickly will I feel better if I give up smoking?

Your health will improve within just a few hours of giving up smoking. This recovery timetable shows you what to expect.

Time	Benefit
After 20 minutes	Your blood pressure* and pulse return to normal.
After 8 hours	Nicotine and carbon monoxide levels in the blood are reduced by half – oxygen levels begin to return to normal.
After 24 hours	Carbon monoxide is eliminated from the body. Your lungs start to clear out debris.
After 48 hours	There is no nicotine in your body. Your sense of smell and taste improve.
After 72 hours	Breathing should become easier and your energy levels are greater.
Between 2 and 12 weeks	Your blood circulation around your body improves.
From 3 to 9 months	Your lung function increases by up to 10 per cent, making breathing easier.
At 5 years	Your risk of having a heart attack is half of someone who still smokes.
From 10 years	Your risk of smoking-related lung cancer fall to half of that of a smoker. Your risk of a heart attack is the same as someone who has never smoked.

*Based on the assumption that you do not already have high blood pressure.
Taken from information on smokefree.nhs.uk

What about the withdrawal symptoms?

Giving up smoking can be difficult, but knowing what to expect and how to deal with it can help. The withdrawal symptoms can affect you mentally and physically, but they are different for everyone. You might experience a lot of the symptoms, or not many at all. It is important to remember that they are temporary and will go away once your body stops being dependent on nicotine or other effects of smoking. It is very difficult to give up smoking by going 'cold turkey' (stopping smoking without cutting down or using nicotine replacement therapy - NRT). Using NRT and getting professional support will greatly increase your chances of success. These are some of the symptoms you might experience when you give up:

Symptom	Duration
Nicotine craving	Longer than 2 weeks
Increased appetite	More than 10 weeks
Depression	Less than 4 weeks
Restlessness	Less than 4 weeks
Poor concentration	Less than 2 weeks
Irritability/aggression	Less than 4 weeks
Disturbed sleep	Less than 1 week
Light headedness	Less than 48 hours

Source: ASH Fact Sheet

If you are struggling to cope with the withdrawal symptoms, remind yourself why you are giving up and look back at the health and financial benefits of quitting smoking for you and your family. Don't forget there are plenty of people who you can turn to for support.

What if I start smoking again?

It's OK to slip up. Most people have more than one attempt before they successfully give up smoking. Think of it as a small setback, rather than a failure.

Try to:

- Be positive and put it behind you; you can't change what has happened.
- Remember why you wanted to give up and try again.
- Think about what made you smoke on this occasion.
- Decide how you will deal with a similar problem if it came up again.
- Remind yourself you are a non-smoker.
- Most of all: **Don't give up giving up!**

Further information and support

The British Lung Foundation has a specialist team of nurses and advisers on our helpline who are dedicated to answering your questions. Whether it's about a visit to the doctor, concerns about your lungs, coping with symptoms or if you just need a chat, they are here for you.

Ringling the BLF Helpline never costs more than a local call and is usually free, even from a mobile. Lines are open from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.



British Lung Foundation
73-75 Goswell Road
London EC1V 7ER

Registered charity in England and Wales (326730) and in Scotland (SC038415)

Code: BK10 **Version:** 2

Last medically reviewed: July 2013

Due for medical review: July 2016

We value feedback on our information. To let us know your views, and for the most up to date version of this information and references, call the helpline or visit **www.blf.org.uk**.

