

Smoking and the Body: What you may not know

You most likely know that smoking can cause serious health problems like cancer, heart disease, lung disease, and stroke. But did you know smoking can cause other health problems too?

Things in tobacco smoke that cause damage:¹

- **Carbon monoxide:** Cuts oxygen flow to the heart, brain, and other tissues
- **Nicotine:** Narrows blood vessels, speeds up heart rate, and makes blood thicker, which can cause clotting
- **Tars:** Solids that can irritate and damage organs



Parts of the body affected by smoking:²

- **Belly:** Less stomach muscle and bigger belly
- **Bones:** Fractures and osteoporosis (brittle bones)
- **Blood:** Cholesterol and fatty buildup
- **Ears:** Hearing loss
- **Eyes:** Cataracts and macular degeneration (both can lead to blindness)
- **Face:** Early wrinkles and stretch marks
- **Feet:** Poor blood flow and possible amputation
- **Mouth:** Mouth sores, ulcers, gum disease, cavities, and tooth loss
- **Muscles:** Weak muscles from poor blood and oxygen flow

Other health concerns:²

- **Cough and phlegm:** Coughing and breathing problems from mucus build-up
- **Fertility:** Decreased fertility in women and men
 - » In women – harder to get pregnant
 - » In men – damaged sperm, which can lead to infertility
- **Impotence:** Not able to get or maintain an erection (erectile dysfunction)
- **Healing:** Wounds take longer to heal
- **Immune system:** Harder to fight sickness

¹ *The Truth About Smoking, Second Edition. (2009). Facts on File, Incorporated.*

² *Smokefree.gov. 18 Ways Smoking Affects Your Health.*