



Smoking cessation

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Why should I quit smoking?

Statistics show that¹:

Every year,
>19,000 Malaysians
are killed by smoking-related diseases



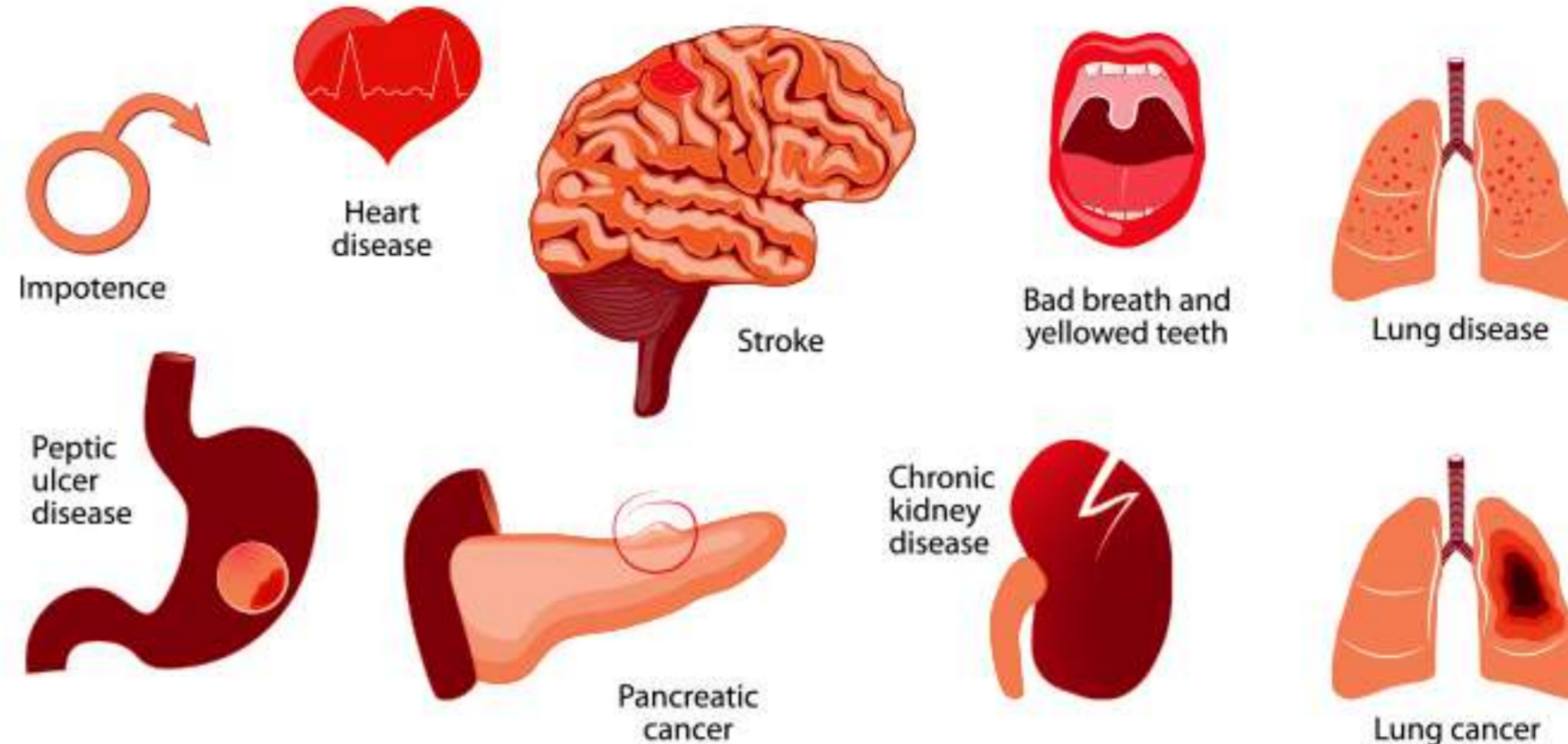
>126,000 children and
>4.1 million adults
continue to use tobacco each day

So, are you one of those who have not quit smoking yet? You may have heard about the benefits of quitting smoking, but are not ready to give up the sense of pleasure you feel within seconds of lighting up your cigarette. Nevertheless, it is good to remind yourself that the side effects brought by smoking have far reaching consequences than the sense of pleasure you enjoy while smoking.



Smoking is harmful to almost all organs in your body because every cigarette you smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals, hundreds of which-- including nicotine and carbon monoxide-- are poisonous to your body.²

Smoking has been associated with about 40 ailments.³ Some of the conditions include³⁻⁵:



If you are pregnant, being a smoker or a second-hand (passive) smoker can be harmful to both you and your baby-- it could result in conditions such as preterm delivery (for the mother), as well as low birth weight, sudden infant death and respiratory illness (for the baby).²

Vaping: Is it safer than smoking?⁶

Vaping e-cigarettes has become increasingly popular in recent years. Although the safety of vaping remains contentious, it is important to know that almost all e-cigarettes (including those products that claim to be nicotine-free) contain nicotine that will make you addicted and is harmful to your body!



Why am I finding it difficult to quit?

Perhaps you have attempted to quit smoking, but it was not successful. Are the following reasons holding you back?

1. The craving for cigarettes is too strong

Cigarettes contain a poisonous chemical-- nicotine-- that makes you highly addicted to it. The addictive effect of nicotine can be as strong as heroin. Nicotine addiction is hard to overcome because it affects your brain by developing extra nicotine receptors to accommodate the large doses of nicotine from tobacco.^{7,8}

2. I can't stand the bad feeling of withdrawal

You feel anxious, irritable and have strong cravings for nicotine when you stop 'feeding' yourself with cigarettes. This phenomenon is known as withdrawal syndrome. It occurs because the brain stops getting the nicotine it is used to get.^{7,8} The possible symptoms of withdrawal syndrome include³:

- Cough
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Stomach ache
- Headache
- Insomnia
- Muscle numbness and stiffness
- Lack of concentration
- Constipation
- Anxiety

As awful as you may feel while going through them, these symptoms are positive signs that show your body is recovering, and should disappear within 3-14 days. Talk to your doctor if you are unable to cope with the symptoms.

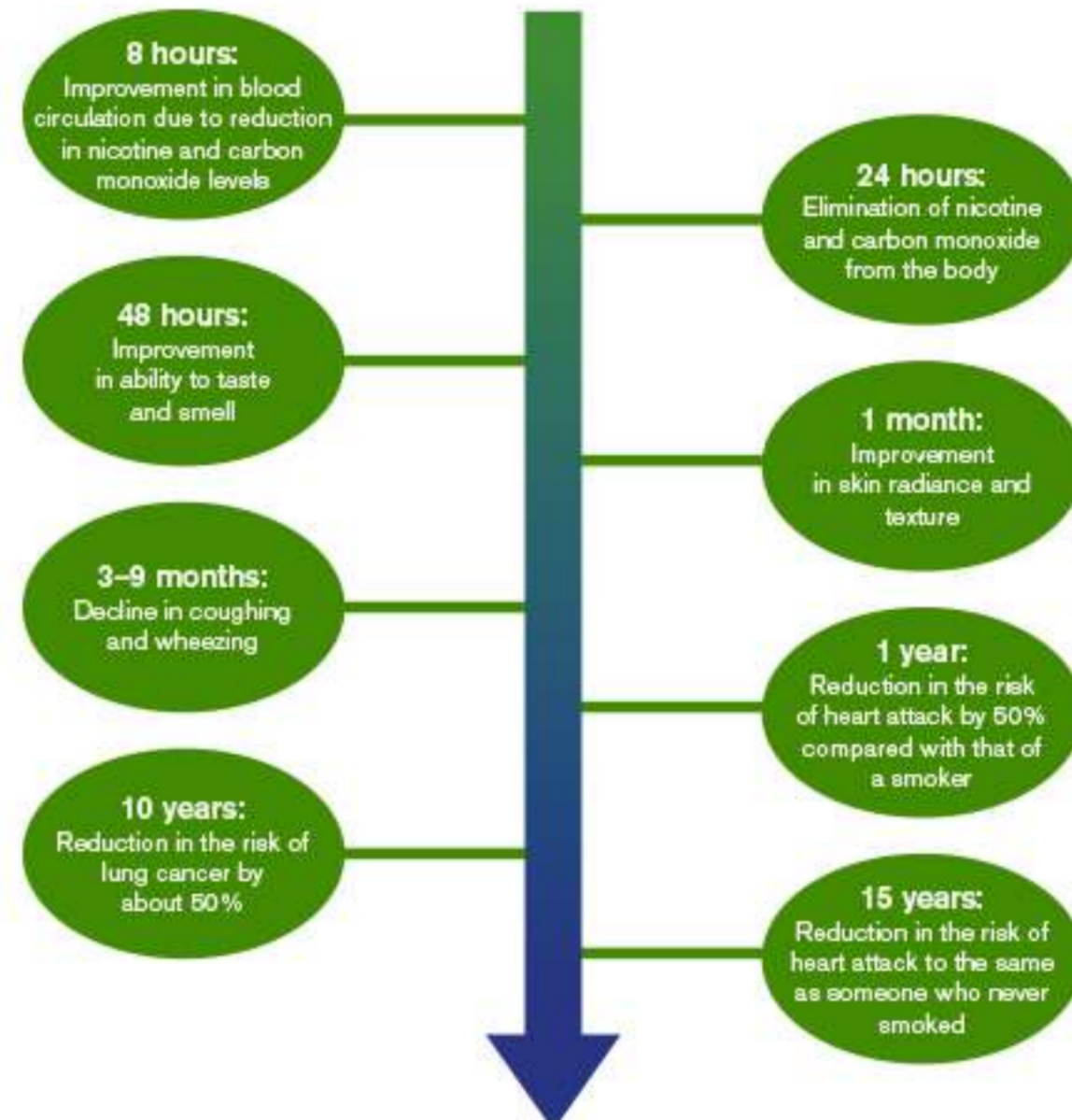
3. I cannot perform my daily activities without cigarettes

This means you are psychologically bound to smoking and have made smoking a part of your life. It helps you wake up in the morning, comforts you when you are stressed or upset, and rewards you for an achievement.⁷

4. I am afraid of gaining weight when I stop smoking³

Your metabolism may slow down when you stop smoking; however, you can keep your metabolism rate high again by doing regular exercise. You can also maintain your weight at a healthy range by eating a healthy diet.⁹

It is definitely not easy to stop, but you should not give up trying. Your strong determination is the main factor to help pushing you through the hard times you may experience during the process. In fact, the health benefits of quitting smoking can be immediate!^{1,2}



Here are reasons why you should seriously consider quitting smoking³:



Getting started

Thinking of stopping smoking after realizing the many benefits of quitting? Before you start, it is important for you to assess why you are smoking in the first place (is it because of peer influence, emotion, or the environment?), and what makes you feel like quitting now (is it for the sake of your health, family or to save money?). Knowing these will allow you to better plan your daily life without smoking and ensure higher chances of success.³

The following suggestions may also be useful for you in fighting your nicotine cravings^{3,10}:

1. Fix a date to start.
2. Get rid of all your cigarettes, ashtrays and lighters in your house, vehicle and office.
3. Make small notes about your goals and place them at places that are easily seen.
4. Encourage and congratulate yourself every time you successfully overcome the urge to smoke.
5. Maintain a strong will to quit. Always remind yourself that you are no longer a smoker.
6. Get a companion to quit with you.
7. Get support from your family, close friends and colleagues.
8. Overcome your withdrawal syndrome. If your urge to smoke appears, try doing activities that will calm you down (eg, doing house chores, reading or exercising).
9. Treat yourself or your family with the money saved from buying cigarettes.
10. Seek help and support from local Quit Smoking Clinics (you may find out more from the National Cancer Institute and the National Cancer Society Malaysia website). Your chances of success are 4X higher with the right medical help.¹



Do I need any treatment to help me quit smoking?

Some people can stop smoking without the aid of a product, therapy or drug (also known as quitting "cold turkey").^{1,3} To make this method of quitting easier, you may need to slowly decrease your smoking frequency several weeks prior to your quit day.³ Nevertheless, if you think that medical treatments may help you achieve your goals better, you may consider nicotine or non-nicotine replacement therapy:

1. Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)

- Over-the-counter medication that aims to alleviate withdrawal symptoms and reduce smokers' desire to smoke¹¹
- Comes in patches, gums and lozenges

2. Non-NRT (prescribed medications)¹

- Helps to relieve your nicotine cravings and withdrawal symptoms¹¹
- May increase your chances of quitting successfully by 2X⁹
- May help reduce weight gain in the first few months⁹
- Comes in the form of pills (eg, varenicline)

You can talk to your doctor or pharmacist to find out the smoking cessation method that works best for you.

It is never too late to make up your mind to quit smoking now. The decision made will definitely be beneficial for you and your loved ones. So, begin by taking your first step today!

If you have already quit smoking, it is important to make sure that you never allow cigarettes back into your life again.



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