

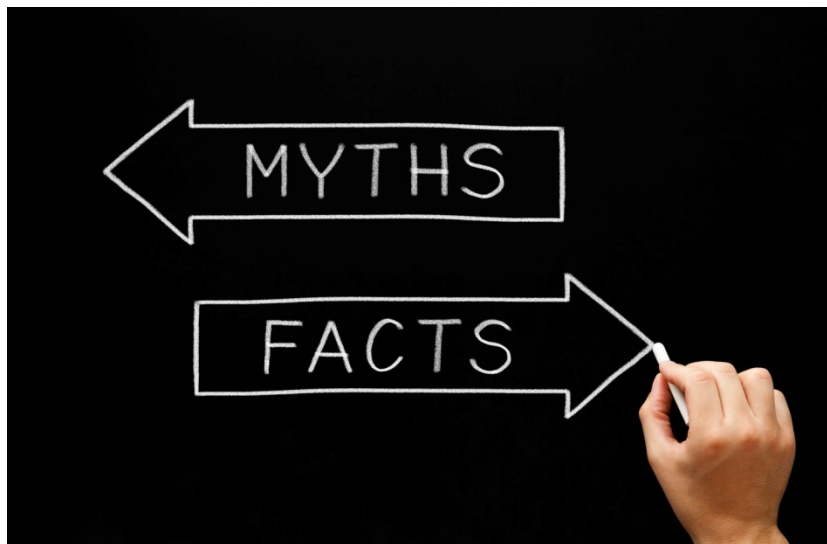
# Busting smoking myths

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There is a lot of information about your health and quitting smoking. Sometimes it is hard to know what to believe. Information given by well-meaning friends and family, as well as what is read on the internet, can often be overwhelming.

Myths or misconceptions can cause people to make unnecessary or harmful decisions that could negatively impact their health.

In this handout we have “busted” some of the common myths and misconceptions about quitting smoking. The information in this booklet is supported by research.



## Myth #1: Many people who smoke live long, healthy lives

### Fact:

It is rare for people who smoke to live long, healthy lives.

On average, people who smoke die 10 years earlier than people who do not smoke and also have a reduced quality of life. Each day approximately 100 people in Canada die of smoking-related illnesses, making smoking the number one leading cause of preventable death.

Over the past 50 years, tobacco manufacturers have made cigarettes more addictive by increasing nicotine levels and adding ammonia to increase the speed in which nicotine is delivered to the brain.

In other words, smoking today is even more dangerous for your health than it was 50 years ago.



## Myth #2: Lung cancer is the only risk for smokers

### Fact:

Smoking affects every organ in your body. It increases your risk for developing:

- Lung, liver, cervical, colon, rectal, and breast cancer
- Heart disease (affects 50% of Canadian smokers aged 55 to 77)
- Low bone density and osteoporosis in women
- Lung diseases such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- High blood pressure and kidney disease due to lowered blood flow
- Inflammation, which can cause arthritis
- Blindness
- Death from infection
- Infertility
- Impotence (erectile dysfunction)
- Diabetes (Type 2)

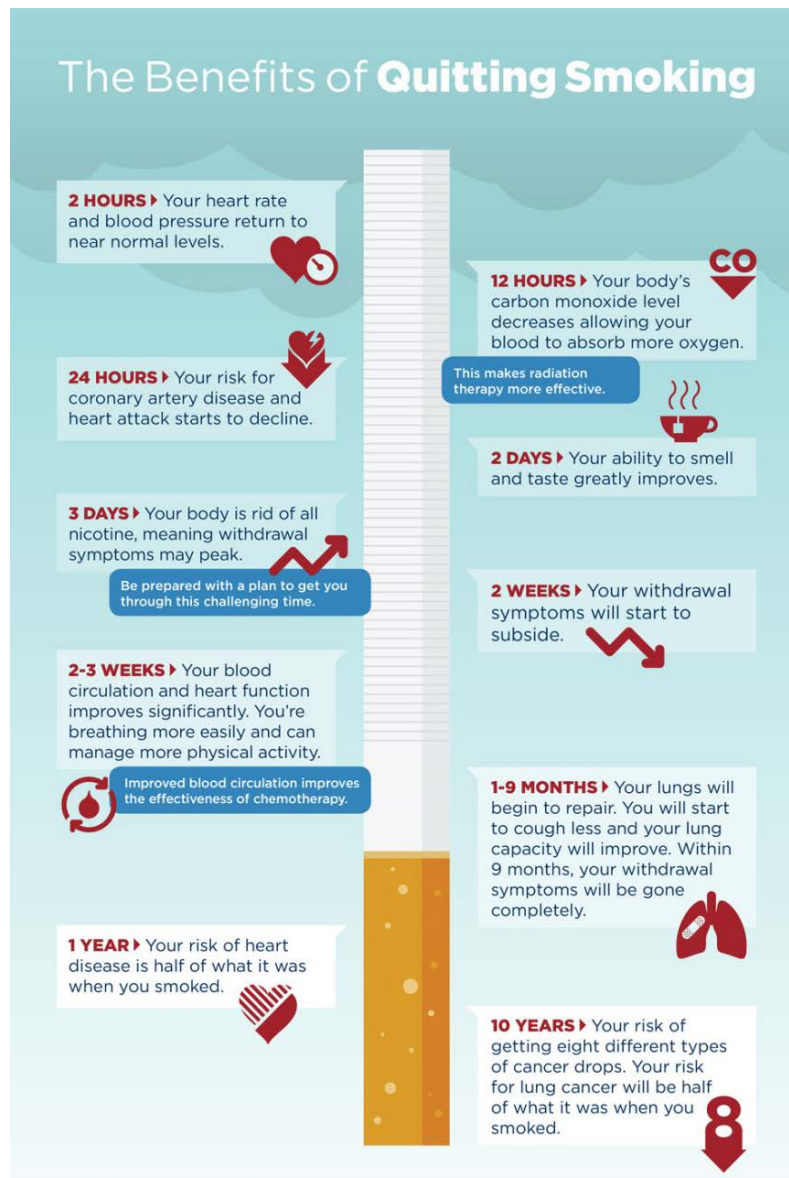
### **Did you know smoking greatly increases your risk of developing diabetes?**

The more cigarettes you smoke the higher your risk for developing this devastating and preventable disease. The 4,000 chemicals in cigarettes attack and harden your blood vessels (veins) causing less oxygen to flow throughout your body. If you develop or have diabetes and continue to smoke, the combination of high blood sugars from diabetes and smoking causes damage to the small blood vessels in your eyes, kidneys, heart, brain and nerves.

## Myth #3: I've smoked for so long the damage is already done

### Fact:

At any age, quitting smoking can add years to your life and improve your quality of life. The chart below shows many of the health benefits of quitting smoking, starting at just 6 hours after your last cigarette.



## Myth #4: Just a few cigarettes a day can't hurt

### Fact:

This is a very common mistaken belief.

There is no such thing as a healthy smoker. Research shows that smoking even 3 to 5 cigarettes a day can significantly increase your risk of developing heart disease such as having a heart attack, stroke or heart failure.

Smoking any number of cigarettes can cause permanent damage to your body. In fact, individuals who classify themselves as light or occasional smokers are still at risk for permanent lung problems, many cancers (such as lung, esophageal, stomach, and/or pancreatic cancer), lung infections, fertility issues, slower recovery from injuries, cataracts and stroke.

In men, smoking can cause erectile dysfunction. One study showed that 3 out of 4 male smokers who had erectile dysfunction found their dysfunction resolved after quitting smoking.

Smoking can also damage sperm and quitting smoking can reverse this damage.



## Myth #5: Smoking helps me to manage stress

### Fact:

Smoking does not decrease stress. People who smoke often report feeling less stressed after a cigarette. What they actually feel is a decrease in their nicotine withdrawal symptoms. They are feeding their addiction to nicotine which feels like decreasing stress.

The reason people who smoke feel less stressed after smoking is because they have also taken an emotional “time out” from their stress. People who smoke also take deep breaths when “stress smoking,” which can also feel relaxing in itself. There are many healthy ways to manage stress that are more effective and healthier. You can speak to your health care provider for more information and strategies to help with stress reduction.

Smoking actually increases the stress on the body by:

- increasing the heart rate,
- constricting blood vessels,
- tensing the muscles and
- allowing less oxygen to reach the brain.



## Myth #6: Quitting smoking will make me gain weight

### Fact:

Not all smokers who quit will gain weight. However, many people will gain 5 to 10 pounds in the first 1 to 2 months after quitting smoking. Light to moderate smokers tend to gain less weight than heavy smokers.

Smoking causes your body to burn an additional 200 calories a day. To help prevent gaining weight when you quit, you may need to move more and eat slightly less. Most people who quit smoking tend to eat more and move less, causing them to gain weight.

**Did you know that adding a ½ hour a day of exercise, such as a brisk walk, will help you to burn those extra 200 calories and help prevent weight gain?**

Making changes to your diet such as increasing your intake of vegetables, fruits and whole grains, and eating less fast food and sugar can help prevent weight gain.

You can talk to your health care provider about seeing a registered dietitian who can help you make healthy changes to your diet and prevent weight gain.

### Remember:

A slight increase in weight is much healthier than continuing to smoke!

## Myth #7: If I quit smoking I will have less energy

### Fact:

Smokers feel energized after a cigarette because nicotine is a stimulant and it increases your energy but only for a very brief period of time.

Smoking reduces your lung function, meaning less oxygen reaches your brain, muscles and other parts of your body. Having less oxygen makes you feel tired and bogged down, both in your mind and in your body.

When you quit smoking, your body is learning how to stay alert without nicotine and you will feel that you have less energy. This feeling will only last 2 to 4 weeks.

Quitting smoking will give you more energy in the long run because your lung function, blood flow and oxygen levels will increase making you more feel alert and energetic.

## Myth #8: Quitting cold turkey is the only way to go

### Fact:

There are more ways to quit smoking other than “cold turkey”. People have successfully quit using many different methods. You need to find the option that works best for you.

Once you decide on a method, combine it with a nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and counselling and you will double your chances of quitting permanently. Nicotine replacement therapies are the long acting nicotine patch and the short acting therapies such as the lozenge, gum, inhaler or spray which are used along with the patch for breakthrough cravings.

Some people worry that they may become addicted to NRT products. However, smokers are already addicted to much higher levels of nicotine in cigarettes and the chance of becoming addicted to NRT products are very low. Follow the manufactures guidelines on how to use the NRT products to quit safely and quickly.

There are some side effects of NRT products but they are rare and non-life threatening. Side effects depend on which form of NRT product you use. Talk to your doctor or health care provider to see which NRT product is right for you.

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## Myth #9: Once a smoker, always a smoker

### Fact:

Millions of people have quit and are living proof that this addiction can be beaten.

In Canada, there are twice as many former smokers than current smokers. To put this into perspective, there are two people who have successfully quit smoking for every person who hasn't quit.

It can take up to 30 attempts to quit permanently. Attempts are not failures. Each attempt is practice at learning a skill. No one is good at anything the first few times. Do not be so hard on yourself. Do not give up hope!

Quitting may not be easy, but it is always possible.

## Myth #10: Light or mild cigarettes are safer and have less nicotine

### Fact:

Light or mild cigarettes are “buzz words” that tobacco companies use to trick people.

In terms of harmful chemicals, they are no different from a ‘regular’ cigarette.

Smokers who use light cigarettes inhale more deeply, puff more often and smoke the whole cigarette. The amount of nicotine you take in end up being the same as a ‘regular’ cigarette.

Smoking light or mild cigarettes does not reduce your risk of lung cancer or heart disease.

## Myth #11: Vaping or e-cigarettes are safe

### Fact:

Electronic cigarettes are devices that resemble regular cigarettes. They usually have a battery, an atomizer (heating element) and a cartridge that contains a liquid that is vapourized and inhaled. They may or may not contain nicotine.

There is not enough evidence to say whether electronic cigarettes are safe or effective to help smokers quit or cut down on smoking. They are not regulated by Health Canada.

Concerns about electronic cigarettes:

- Some tests have shown toxins released in the vapour that are harmful or can cause cancer.
  - There have been reports of the battery overheating and exploding.
  - Some electronic cigarettes labeled as nicotine free have been found to contain nicotine.
  - The liquid nicotine contained in the cartridges can be lethal in very small amounts to children and animals.
  - Many places have restricted their use in public places.
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## Myth #12: Second-hand smoke does not harm anyone

### Fact:

Second-hand smoke harms everyone, including your pets.

A “no smoking” rule in the home and the car lowers the amount of smoke in the air and lowers the risk of disease in those who don’t smoke around you. However, low risk does not mean no risk!

Breathing in someone else’s cigarette smoke is like you smoking cigarettes. Second-hand smoke is the number two cause of lung cancer and living with a smoker increases your risk of heart and lung disease.

Breathing in second-hand smoke for about 30 minutes can harden your arteries. In fact, an individual who does not smoke sitting in a smoky room for 2 hours would inhale the equivalent of 4 cigarettes worth of smoke.

Effects of second-hand smoke	
<p>In children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ear infections</li> <li>• Asthma</li> <li>• Lung infections</li> <li>• Wheezing</li> <li>• Coughing</li> <li>• Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)</li> </ul>	<p>In adults:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stroke</li> <li>• Irritation of the inside of the nose</li> <li>• Lung cancer</li> <li>• Heart disease</li> </ul>

## Myth #13: There is no such thing as third-hand smoke

### Fact:

Third-hand smoke is a term that has been used for about 10 years.

It is the toxins trapped in hair, skin, clothing, carpet, furniture, dust and toys. It is different from second-hand smoke that comes from a burning a cigarette and the smoke exhaled by the smoker.

Third-hand smoke has the same toxic chemicals as second-hand smoke and it can build up over time. The damage to your health from third-hand smoke is the same as second-hand smoke. Third-hand smoke can affect brain and lung development in young children.

It is best to have smoke free homes and to replace any furniture, curtains or drapes that have been exposed to smoke to reduce your exposure to third-hand smoke residues.

## Myth #14: Tobacco is good for the economy

### Fact:

Health care costs to treat diseases caused by smoking are much higher than the profit that is made from taxes on sales of cigarettes.

Non-smokers are more productive and miss less work than smokers.

Both businesses and health insurance companies benefit from programs that support smoking cessation.