



**BRAIN** Smoking boosts the risk of blood clots, stroke and possibly Alzheimer's disease. It impairs sleep.

**EARS** Smokers are susceptible to earlier hearing loss because smoking promotes the deposit of fatty plaques in vessels bringing blood to the ears.

**MOUTH** As if stained teeth, smoker's breath and lines around the mouth weren't enough, smoking also ups the risk of oral, throat and esophageal cancers. It accelerates gum disease and tooth decay and slows the healing process after oral surgery.

**RESPIRATORY TRACT** Smoking is the major cause of lung cancer. It also raises your risk of other lung conditions — emphysema, bronchitis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. It exacerbates asthma in smokers and their second-hand-smoke victims and boosts susceptibility to pneumonia and flu.

**GI TRACT** Smoking reduces resistance to *Helicobacter pylori*, a bacterium that can promote stomach ulcers and cancer. It raises the risk of inflammatory bowel disease and colorectal cancer.

**LEGS** Smoking is a major cause of peripheral vascular disease, in which the arteries of the extremities become blocked by plaque or inflammation, causing leg pain and impaired walking.

**IMMUNE SYSTEM** Tobacco toxins undermine the immune defences, increasing vulnerability to disease.

**HAIR** Chemicals in cigarettes can starve hair of oxygen, making it dull and brittle. Smoke makes your flowing locks smell like overflowing ashtrays and turns white and light grey hair a nasty yellow.

**NOSE** Habitual puffing damages the nose's lining and is associated with a chronic runny nose, sinus disease and nasal cancer. The common cold is even more common in smokers. Smoking impairs the senses of smell and taste.

**URINARY TRACT** Tobacco is a risk factor for bladder and kidney cancers.

**REPRODUCTIVE TRACT** Tobacco reduces a woman's fertility by sending toxins into the ovarian fluid around her eggs. In pregnancy, it's linked to placental problems and miscarriage. By reducing oxygen to the fetus, it contribute to low birth weights. Smoking is also a risk factor for cervical (and breast) cancer. In men, it lowers the number, quality and motility of sperm, and it can impair sexual function by decreasing blood flow to the penis.

**SKIN** Smoking robs skin of oxygen and reduces the production of the supportive protein collagen, leading to premature wrinkling. Wounds heal more slowly in smokers.

**FEET** Smoking decreases circulation to the feet and toes, raising the risk of infection and amputation.

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**EYES** Besides leaving your peepers red and irritated, smoking hikes your risk for degeneration of the retina and for cataracts, a clouding of the eye's lens.

**BONES** Smoking interferes with the deposition of calcium in the skeleton. It lowers estrogen levels and hastens menopause, depriving women earlier of bone-strengthening estrogen. And fractures heal more slowly in smokers.

**BLOOD VESSELS** Carbon monoxide in smoke displaces oxygen in the blood, causing it to make more red blood cells and become thicker and more apt to clot. Smoking strips vessel walls of their non-stick coating, upping the chance that they'll snag clots. It's a risk factor for the buildup of fatty plaques and for aneurysm, a dilation of the aortic wall.

**HEART** The best thing you can do for your heart is not smoke. A smoker is several times more likely to have a heart attack than a non-smoker and will die an average of eight years earlier. Smoking robs the heart of oxygen, makes it beat faster and raises the risk of high blood pressure.

## Dial up, butt out

Here's a list of quit-smoking helplines by province and territory.

Newfoundland and Labrador  
I 800 363 5864

New Brunswick and Nova Scotia  
I 877 513 5333

Prince Edward Island I 888 818 6300

Quebec I 866 527 7383

Ontario I 877 513 5333

Manitoba and Saskatchewan  
I 877 513 5333

Alberta I 866 332 2322

British Columbia I 877 455 2233

Yukon I 800 661 0408,  
ext. 8393

Nunavut I 866 877 3845

Northwest Territories I 867 920 8826

# Smoke-Free Health-Full

*Your whole body will thank you for quitting* DIANA SWIFT

It's the new year, and you may be among the estimated 73% of Canada's nearly five million smokers who'd like to stub out their cigarettes for good. And there's more incentive to quit now than ever. Indoor smoking bans are in effect almost everywhere, and the frigid Canadian winter makes sneaking outside for a drag — well, a drag.

And with a carton of cigarettes ringing up at \$70 or more, think of all the extra money you'll have to put toward those post-holiday bills. But by far the best reason to quit is better health, now and down the road. Smoking deprives your tissues of oxygen and exposes them to a cocktail of toxins and carcinogens with far-reaching ill effects. If you're a one-pack-a-day smoker, each year you take 73,000 puffs of harmful chemicals into your lungs.

With the help of Dr. Sam Shortt, director of the Canadian Medical Association's Office for Public Health, we put together a quick review of some of the body parts and systems that benefit when you butt out. So take the tour on the opposite page, then ask: Why am I still doing this to myself?

## Get Help

Studies show that nicotine replacement in the form of gums, tablets, lozenges, nasal sprays, patches and inhalers — plus good social and health-care support — can boost your chances of success. Other medications — the anti-craving drug varenicline (Champix) and the brain-chemical modifier bupropion (Zyban), for example — can also help. New drugs are on the way.

Online community programs such as [www.stopsmokingcenter.net](http://www.stopsmokingcenter.net) are proving effective in helping smokers quit and quitters stay smoke-free, says Dr. Peter Selby, clinical director of addiction programs at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto. Some are giving up smoking with support from toll-free quit lines (see "Dial Up, Butt Out," left).

"There are several approaches to smoking cessation," says Selby. "You can make a sudden, precipitous decision to stop or pick a day in the future to quit and count down to it. You can also gradually reduce the amount you smoke over time. All are equally valid and depend on the individual."

Speak with your doctor about available aids. Thousands of Canadians have given up cigarettes, and so can you. For many people, permanent smoking cessation is not a sudden event but a lengthy process requiring several attempts. "The metaphor I use is that recovering from smoking is like learning to ride a bicycle," says Selby. "You need to keep practising. It's a continuum of learning and change."

For more information, go to [www.canadian-health.ca](http://www.canadian-health.ca). Click on Past Issues, then on January/February 2007, then on "Be a Quitter!" See also [www.gosmokefree.ca](http://www.gosmokefree.ca), [www.quit4life.com](http://www.quit4life.com) and [www.itscanadastime.com](http://www.itscanadastime.com). 