

Smoking Tobacco and HIV

If you have HIV or AIDS and smoke cigarettes, you put extra stress on your body. Smoking can make it harder to fight off infections because smoking weakens your immune system. More people die each year from tobacco use than from HIV, car accidents, alcohol use, illegal drug use, murders, and suicides combined.

What is Tobacco?

Tobacco is a green, leafy plant that is grown in warm climates. After it is picked, it is dried, ground up, and used in different ways. Nicotine is a chemical substance found in tobacco leaves. Addiction to nicotine is what keeps people smoking/using tobacco.

What is in a Cigarette?

Every single cigarette contains an estimated 4,800 harmful chemicals including 11 proven to cause cancer in humans. *Some* of the chemicals found in cigarettes are:

- Acetone – found in nail polish remover.
- Ammonia – household cleaner.
- Formaldehyde – used to embalm dead bodies.
- Arsenic – used in rat poison.
- Nicotine – found in bug sprays.
- Tar – used in paving roads.
- Carbon Monoxide – poisonous gas released in car exhaust fumes.
- Cadmium – main ingredient in battery acid.

Smoking and HIV

Tobacco use can make it harder to fight off deadly infections and smoking cigarettes can make it harder to fight off HIV related infections like fungal thrush, oral hairy leukoplakia, caused by the Epstein-Barre virus and linked to tobacco, as well as various types of pneumonia.

Health Effects of Smoking

1. Heart Disease

Some HIV medications can raise the amount of fats and cholesterol in your blood. Fats and cholesterol clog the blood flow to your heart, raise your blood pressure and puts more stress on your heart. These factors can raise your chances of heart disease, a heart attack, or a stroke. Smoking can make all of these problems worse.

2. Oral Problems

People with HIV may get sores and infections like thrush or herpes inside the mouth and on the tongue and lips. Smoking can make these worse. Dental problems, gum disease, and mouth cancer are linked to tobacco use.

3. Immune System

HIV medications can help make your immune system stronger, however, smoking weakens your immune system which makes it harder to fight off infections.

4. Lung diseases

People with HIV who smoke get lung cancer, emphysema, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and other lung infections more than smokers who do not have HIV. Smokers with HIV are also at a greater risk for pneumonia.

Quitting Smoking Has Many Health Benefits

20 Minutes after Quitting

Your heart rate drops.

12 Hours after Quitting

Carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal.

2 Weeks to 3 Months after Quitting

Your heart attack risk begins to drop and your lung function begins to improve.

1 Year after Quitting

Your added risk of heart disease is half that of a smoker's.

5 Years after Quitting

Risk of a stroke is now similar to those who have never smoked.

Resources to Help Smokers Quit

The California Smokers Helpline (1-800-NO-BUTTS) is a free state-wide telephone service that helps people quit smoking tobacco. The helpline offers six free one-on-one cessation services over the phone with a trained counselor. Services are available in English (1-800-662-8887), Spanish (1-800-456-6386), Vietnamese (1-800-778-8440), Mandarin (1-800-838-8917), Cantonese (1-800-838-8917) and Korean (1-800-556-5564). Services are also available for the hearing impaired (1-800-933-4833). Hours of services are Monday through Friday from 7am to 9pm, Saturday from 9am to 1pm. You can also visit the CA Smokers' Helpline website for additional information at <http://www.californiasmokershelpline.org/>