

## Smoking Can Wreck and Prematurely Age Your Body Before It Kills You

Before dying from tobacco use, smokers and other tobacco users (including those exposed to secondhand smoke) face significantly higher risks of all sorts of other irritating or debilitating physical and medical problems. The enormous variety of harm caused by tobacco use makes providing a comprehensive list impossible, but here are some of the highlights.

- Most people have heard about “smoker’s wrinkles” or the increased “crow’s feet” around smokers’ eyes; but few realize that smoking has also been associated with prematurely gray hair and even hair loss.
- Chronic coughing, increased phlegm, emphysema and bronchitis have been well-established products of smoking for decades; and smokers are also more susceptible to influenza and more likely to experience severe symptoms when they get the flu.
- Smoking causes bad breath and makes smokers’ homes and clothes stink; and, perhaps fortunately for smokers, it also reduces their sense of smell.
- Besides weakening smokers’ noses, cigarette smoking (and exposure to secondhand smoke) is associated with hearing loss and vision problems including cataracts and even blindness.
- Beyond smoke— or nicotine-stained teeth, smokers are also more likely to suffer from periodontal disease and to have more serious periodontal disease, including tooth loss.
- Cigarette smoking increases both the risk and the severity of rheumatoid arthritis.
- Smoking can cause the early onset of menopause among women, incontinence, and reduced fertility; and it may also reduce fertility among men.
- Cigarette smoking is a risk factor for osteoporosis, and could become a more powerful factor among today’s youth who have begun smoking at earlier ages.
- If a smoker breaks a bone or needs any kind of surgery, his or her smoking can interfere with the healing process.
- Early evidence suggested that nicotine might actually help some people suffering from Alzheimer’s disease, but more recent evidence shows that smoking actually doubles a person’s risk of dementia and Alzheimer’s.
- Smoking and nicotine have also been associated with increased headache activity.
- While many smokers believe that smoking relieves stress, it is actually a major cause. Smoking only appears to reduce stress because it lessens the irritability and tension caused by the underlying nicotine addiction.

Adapted from:

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