

The Dangers of Smoking

Millions of people in the United Kingdom are smokers. However, there are lots of benefits to giving up smoking as cigarettes are not only a danger to health but are also very expensive.

The Cost of Cigarettes

A person that smokes 20 cigarettes each day will spend nearly £50 every week on cigarettes. During a year, that adds up to more than £2000! Imagine all the other ways this much money could be spent - holidays, treats or days out... what a waste! Smoking is also expensive on a larger scale as it costs the country a lot of money. Approximately 83% of the cost of a pack of cigarettes goes to the UK government to help to pay for the medical care of treating health problems relating to smoking but even this huge amount is not enough to cover the total bill.



Smoking and Health

Smoking is also extremely harmful to health. The chemicals in cigarettes can cause all types of health problems, ranging from coughs to much more serious illnesses, such as cancer and emphysema (a condition that affects the lungs and causes extreme difficulties in breathing).

Did You Know...?

These are just some of the chemicals in cigarettes:

- nicotine
- tar
- carbon monoxide
- formaldehyde (used to embalm dead bodies)
- hydrogen cyanide (a deadly poison)
- arsenic (used in rat poison)
- ammonia (used for cleaning windows and toilet bowls)
- DDT (a banned insecticide)
- polonium (a radioactive element)

The nicotine in cigarette smoke is an addictive substance, which is one of the reasons why so many people find it difficult to stop smoking once they have started. Nicotine affects the brain and causes brain cells to send messages to other areas of the body to make a person more relaxed. When this feeling wears off, the smoker feels the need to smoke another cigarette; this is called a 'craving'.

The Other Effects of Cigarettes

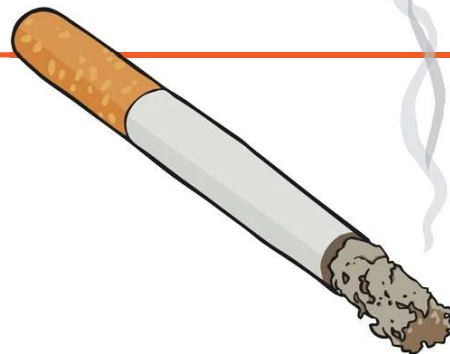
The tar in cigarettes can stain teeth and fingers yellow. The carbon monoxide in them decreases the amount of oxygen in the blood, which makes the heart work harder than normal. The longer a person smokes for, the more chance they have of contracting cancer. Many people associate only lung cancer with cigarette smoke, however, it can cause cancer in many areas of the body.

Stopping Smoking

Even though stopping smoking is difficult, there are lots of places to get support, particularly through advice from the NHS. People often use nicotine patches so that they can slowly get used to there being less nicotine in their system. These patches gradually allow less and less nicotine into a smoker's body, which makes it easier to stop. Within 1 – 9 months of stopping smoking, the lung capacity begins to increase, meaning it is easier for an ex-smoker to breathe.

Statistics

- 1 in 5 adults (19%) in the UK are smokers: 20% of men and 17% of women.
- This means that there are approximately 9.6 million adult smokers in the country.
- Smoking rates in the UK have halved since 1974, when 51% of men and 41% of women smoked.



Questions

1. How much does smoking cost an individual and the UK?

2. What percentage of adults in the UK are non-smokers? How do you know?

3. Why do people find it difficult to give up smoking?

4. How is the brain affected by cigarette smoke?

5. Why do you think smoking in Great Britain has halved since 1974?

6. How might someone stop smoking?

7. Which of the dangerous chemicals in cigarettes do you think is the most dangerous?

Explain your reasons.

8. Why does the heart have to work harder when someone is smoking?

9. Which facts and information would you use to convince someone to give up smoking? Why have you chosen these facts?
