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Health Benefits of Quitting Smoking

The health benefits of quitting smoking are the main advantages of quitting smoking. Harmful chemicals and poisons in tobacco smoke can damage the body and inhibit its functions. Smokers often find that the health benefits of quitting smoking are useful motivators to quit and stay stopped.

"The health benefits of quitting smoking are immediate and substantial. They far exceed any risks from the average 5-pound weight gain or any adverse psychological effects that may follow quitting. The benefits extend to men and women, to the young and the old, to those who are sick and to those who are well. Smoking cessation represents the single most important step that smokers can take to enhance the length and quality of their lives." ¹

Thankfully, when you stop smoking, the body experiences some positive side effects and, as you can see from the timeline below, the healing process begins within just 20 minutes of giving up.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF QUITTING SMOKING

Timeline	Benefit - What happens when you quit
20 min.	Blood pressure and pulse return to normal.
8 hrs	Oxygen levels return to normal. Nicotine and carbon monoxide levels in blood reduce by half.
12 hrs	Carbon monoxide levels in blood drop to normal. ²
24 hrs	Carbon monoxide will be eliminated from the body. Lungs start to clear out mucous and other smoking debris.
48 hrs	There is no nicotine left in the body. Ability to taste and smell is greatly improved.
72 hrs	Breathing becomes easier. Bronchial tubes begin to relax and energy levels increase.
2-12 weeks	Circulation improves. Lung function increases.

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3 - 9 months	Coughs, wheezing and breathing problems improve as lung functions are increased by up to 10%.
12 months	Excess risk of coronary heart disease is reduced by about half and declines gradually hereafter.
5 yrs.	Risk of heart attack falls to about half that of a smoker. Risk of stroke returns to the level of people who have never smoked (5 - 15 years). ¹
10 yrs.	Risk of lung cancer falls to about half that of a smoker.
15 yrs.	Risk of lung cancer is reduced to close to that observed in nonsmokers. Risk of coronary heart disease falls to the same as someone who has never smoked. If you have quit smoking before age 50 you have halved the risk of dying in the next 15 years compared with continuing smokers. ¹

Table 1 - Quitting Smoking Timeline - What happens when you quit smoking.

More Benefits of Giving Up Smoking

Family members, friends, colleagues and associates who don't smoke also benefit when you stop.

See: [advantages of quitting smoking](#) and [quitting smoking facts](#).

References

1. U.S Department of Health and Human Services. *The health benefits of smoking cessation*. U S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service. Centers for Disease Control. Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Office on Smoking and Health. DHHS Publication No. (CDC) 90-8416. 1990.
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The health consequences of smoking: nicotine addiction a report of the surgeon general. (1988) Atlanta, GA.

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