

# 8 Health risks

"We've known for decades that smoking is bad for your health. The toxins from cigarette smoke go everywhere the blood flows."  
Richard H Carmona, US Surgeon General, 2004

All forms of tobacco are addictive and lethal. Conclusive scientific evidence confirms that smokers face significantly increased risks of death from numerous cancers (particularly lung cancer), heart disease, stroke, emphysema and many other fatal and non-fatal diseases. Cigar, pipe, waterpipe and bidi smokers suffer the same types of health consequences as cigarette smokers. Those who chew tobacco face greatly elevated risks for cancers of the oral cavity, especially of the lip, tongue, palate and pharynx.

Women and children suffer additional health risks from smoking. Smoking during pregnancy is dangerous to the mother as well as to the foetus, and may result in developmental problems that haunt children throughout their lives. Exposure to second-hand smoke during childhood compounds the adverse effects of foetal exposure.

Cigarettes low in tar or nicotine do not reduce smoking hazards. However, quitting greatly reduces health risks and produces immediate and long-term health benefits. From a public health perspective, tobacco has virtually no positive attributes. Nicotine is used as an insecticide and researchers continue to seek other uses for the tobacco plant, such as genetic engineering or growing biomass.

**Health risks due to smoking in pregnancy**

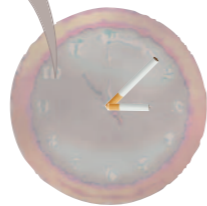
**Mother:**  
Spontaneous abortion / miscarriage  
Ectopic pregnancy  
Abruptio placentae  
Placenta praevia  
Premature rupture of the membranes  
Premature birth

**Foetus, infants, children:**  
Smaller infant (for gestational age)  
Stillborn infant  
Birth defects, e.g. oral clefts and limb reduction  
Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)  
Reduced lung function  
Long-term physical and mental effects  
Lower respiratory tract infections

**Deadly chemicals**  
Tobacco smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals, 60 of which are known or suspected carcinogens and some of which have marked irritant properties.

**Tobacco smoke includes**

Acetone	as found in paint stripper
Arsenic	ant poison
Butane	lighter fuel
Cadmium	car batteries
Carbon monoxide	car exhaust fumes
DDT	insecticide
Formaldehyde	embalming fluid
Hydrogen cyanide	capital punishment by gas
Methanol	rocket fuel
Nicotine	cockroach poison
Phenol	toilet bowl disinfectant
Propylene glycol	antifreeze
Toluene	industrial solvent
Vinyl chloride	plastics

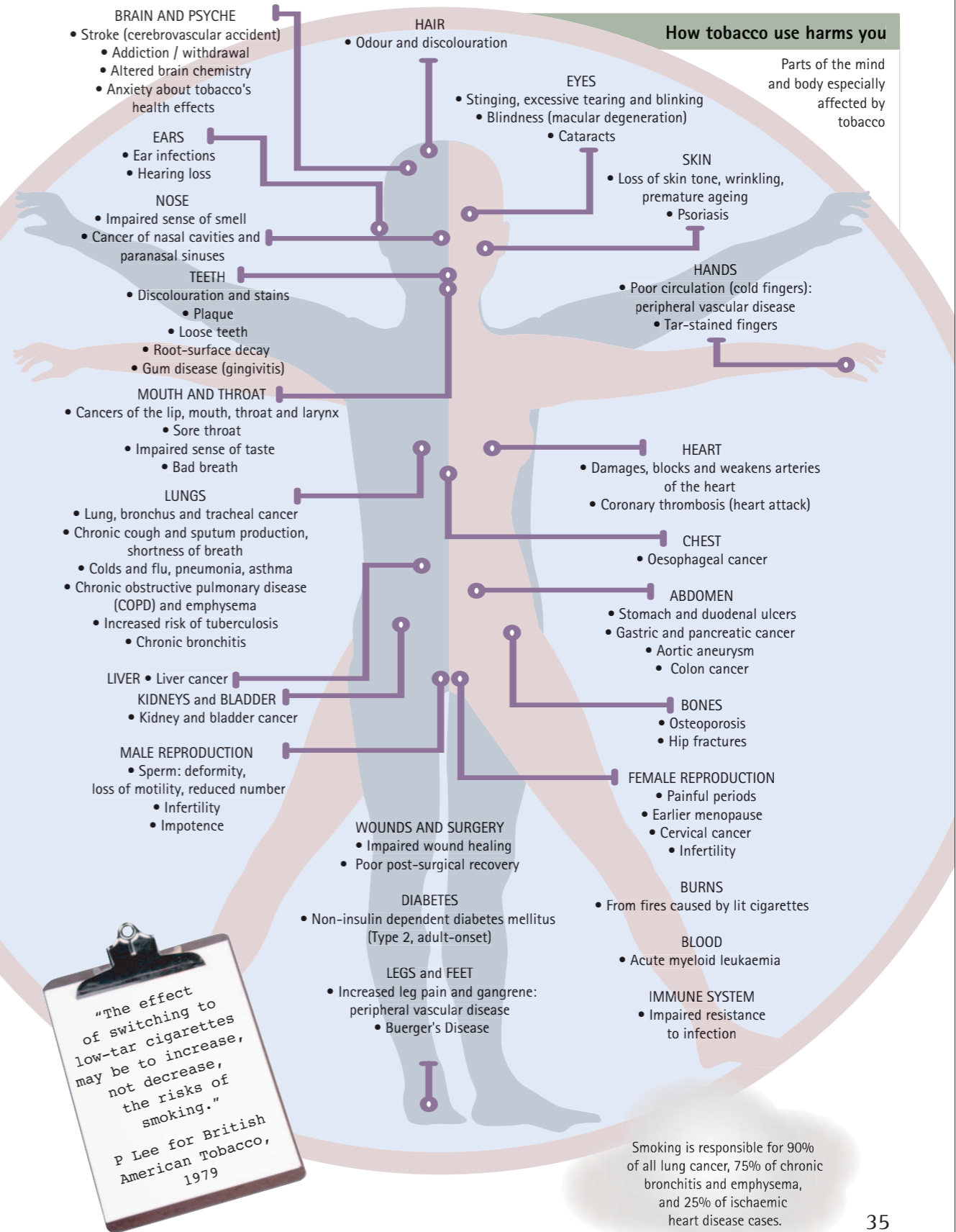


**Time ticks away**  
Every cigarette takes 7 minutes off a smoker's life.

**Private statement**  
"Nicotine is the addicting agent in cigarettes."  
Brown & Williamson official in 1983

**Sworn testimony before US Congress**  
"I believe that nicotine is not addictive."  
CEOs of the seven leading tobacco companies in 1994

"The effect of switching to low-tar cigarettes may be to increase, not decrease, the risks of smoking."  
P Lee for British American Tobacco, 1979



Smoking is responsible for 90% of all lung cancer, 75% of chronic bronchitis and emphysema, and 25% of ischaemic heart disease cases.