

HEALTH RISKS

“Tobacco use can kill in so many ways that it is a risk factor for six of the eight leading causes of death in the world.”

—MARGARET CHAN FUNG FU-CHUN,
DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WHO, 2008

All forms of tobacco are addictive and lethal. Conclusive scientific evidence confirms that smokers face significantly elevated risks of death from numerous cancers (particularly lung cancer), heart and respiratory diseases, stroke, and many other fatal conditions. Cigar, pipe, waterpipe, and bidi smokers suffer the same types of health consequences as cigarette smokers. Cigarettes advertised as low in tar or nicotine do not reduce smoking hazards. People who chew tobacco face greatly elevated risks for cancers of the oral cavity, especially of the lip, tongue, palate, and pharynx.

Smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke impose exceptional health risks on pregnant women, infants, and children. Smoking during pregnancy is dangerous to the health of expectant mothers, potentially lethal to the fetus and infant, and may lead to lifelong health and developmental disorders among exposed children. Secondhand smoke exposure during childhood compounds the adverse health effects of fetal exposure.

Tobacco is an addictive carcinogen that directly kills half of its users, as well as nonsmoking bystanders. There is no safe form of tobacco and no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. However, quitting greatly reduces health risks and produces immediate and long-term health benefits. Tobacco’s terrible health consequences are entirely preventable.



PREGNANT WOMEN’S tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure are current or emerging problems in several low- and middle-income nations, jeopardizing ongoing efforts to improve maternal and child health.

THE RISK OF dying from lung cancer is more than 23 times higher among men who smoke cigarettes, and about 13 times higher among women smokers, when compared with nonsmokers.

SMOKING SIGNIFICANTLY increases the risk of tuberculosis.

Pregnancy

HEALTH RISKS OF SMOKING DURING PREGNANCY

MOTHER

- Abruptio placentae
- Placenta praevia
- Premature rupture of membranes
- Premature birth
- Spontaneous abortion/miscarriage
- Ectopic pregnancy

FETUSES, INFANTS, CHILDREN

- Stunted gestational development
- Stillbirth
- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Reduced lung function and impaired lung development
- Asthma exacerbation
- Acute lower respiratory infection; bronchitis and pneumonia
- Respiratory irritation: cough, phlegm, wheeze
- Childhood cancers: leukemia, lymphoma, brain tumor
- Oral cleft

DEADLY CHEMICALS

Tobacco smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, more than fifty known or suspected carcinogens, and many potent irritants.

Tobacco smoke includes:	As found in:
Acetone	paint stripper
Acetylene	welding torches
Arsenic	ant poison
Benzene	Napalm
Butane	lighter fuel
Cadmium	car batteries
Carbon monoxide	car exhaust fumes
DDT	insecticide
Formaldehyde	embalming fluid
Hydrogen cyanide	capital punishment by gas
Lead	old paint, leaded gasoline
Methanol	rocket fuel
Nicotine	cockroach poison
Phenol	toilet bowl disinfectant
Polonium 210	nuclear weapons
Propylene glycol	antifreeze
Toluene	industrial solvent
Vinyl chloride	plastics

“Because known carcinogens are produced from such a wide variety of organic materials during the process of pyrolysis, it is most unlikely that a completely safe form of tobacco smoking can be evolved.”

—British American Tobacco, 1965

How tobacco harms you

