

THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING UP SMOKING FOR PEOPLE WITH HIV

## USEFUL CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

### National

**National Association of People Living With HIV/AIDS (NAPWA)**

02 8568 0300

[www.napwa.org.au](http://www.napwa.org.au)

**Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO)**

02 9557 9399

[www.afao.org.au](http://www.afao.org.au)

For your local AIDS Council or PLHIV organisation please consult the CONTACTS factsheet.

**Cancer Council of Australia**

National Quitline: 13 78 48 (13 QUIT)

[www.quitbecauseyoucan.org.au](http://www.quitbecauseyoucan.org.au)

Cancer Council of Australia website has links to State and Territory Cancer Councils

[www.cancer.org.au](http://www.cancer.org.au)

### References:

[1] Reynolds NR, Neidig JL and Wewers ME. (2004). Illness Representation and Smoking Behaviour: A Focus Group Study of HIV-Positive men. *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care*, 15, 4, 37-47.

[2] Doll R, Peto R, Boreham J and Sutherland I (2004) Mortality in relation to smoking: 50 years' observations on male British doctors. *British Medical Journal*, 328(7455), 1519.

[3] Cancer Council of Australia (2009). *Stop smoking factsheet*. [http://www.cancer.org.au/file/HealthProfessionals/Factsheets/FS\\_StopSmoking.pdf](http://www.cancer.org.au/file/HealthProfessionals/Factsheets/FS_StopSmoking.pdf), retrieved on 6 June 2009.

## SELF HELP AND PEER SUPPORT

There are numerous books and websites that you can refer to for information and ideas on quitting smoking. Some people find that attending 'quit smoking groups' extremely useful.

Research has shown that attending self-help smoking cessation workshops that are tailored to specific groups—such as groups for young people, gay men, or PLHIV—result in better outcomes than groups that don't take into account the specific cultural and contextual factors of the people attending.

Some AIDS Councils and PLHIV organisations have programmes in place specifically to help HIV positive people to stop smoking. Check with your local AIDS council or PLHIV organisation to see what support they can offer you.

### REMEMBER THESE 3 THINGS:

1. Not everyone is successful the first time. It may take several attempts (or more) before you are smoke free.
2. Use more than one method of quitting. The more support and help you receive the more likely it will be that you will be successful.
3. Talk to your GP and your friends for emotional support. Having good people around you can only increase the likelihood of becoming an ex-smoker.

## TO HELP YOU ON YOUR WAY TO BE AN EX-SMOKER WRITE DOWN THE FIRST THREE STEPS YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE.

I HAVE DECIDED TO BECOME AN EX-SMOKER. THE FIRST THREE STEPS I WILL TAKE TO DO THAT ARE:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



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## INTRODUCTION

If you are HIV positive, stopping smoking is the single most important step you can take to improve your health.

This factsheet is designed to inform people living with HIV (PLHIV) of the particular impact smoking can have on your health, and provide you with some tools to assist you in giving up and remaining 'smoke free' for the rest of your life.

## SMOKING AND HIV

Everyone knows smoking causes heart disease, many cancers, strokes, bronchitis, and emphysema, as well as complications with fertility and childbirth. However, **being HIV positive and a smoker carries added risks and health consequences.**

In Australia and around the world, HIV-positive people are more likely to smoke than HIV-negative people. Through talking with people living with HIV, researchers have identified a number of factors that contribute to the high prevalence of smoking among PLHIV, including some positive factors, such as pleasure and assisting in creating and sustaining connections with friends and acquaintances; and negative factors, such as high levels of depression, stress, social isolation, and stigmatisation<sup>1</sup>.

HIV-positive people are at a significantly higher risk of heart disease than HIV-negative people, both due to effects of HIV itself on the body, and the side effects of some HIV treatments.

Importantly, for people living with HIV, smoking weakens the immune system, which can significantly increase the likelihood of lowering the level of CD4 cells, and therefore increasing the likelihood of getting opportunistic infections.

## WHY DO PEOPLE SMOKE?

If we know that smoking is harmful to our health why do people continue to do it?

Although the answer to this question is obviously complicated, for most people, the need to smoke can be broken down into three general categories:

1. **Habit:** that is, people associate smoking with other activities. For example, whenever you have a coffee or a beer you might also have a cigarette.
2. **Psychological:** certain feelings or situations may make you want to have a cigarette. For example, anxiety, fear or sadness could trigger your craving for a cigarette.
3. **Chemical Addiction:** tobacco contains the chemical nicotine, which is highly addictive. If you can't go without a cigarette for more than an hour or two, or if you regularly wake through the night to have a cigarette, you may be physically addicted to nicotine.

Of course, for many smokers, their dependency on tobacco is caused by a combination of all 3 of these reasons. For you to better understand why you smoke, you may need to do some 'personal research'. Knowing why you smoke and what type of smoker you are could help you identify the best strategies for helping you quit.

## TRY THIS...

Every time you light up a cigarette make a note of:

- **the time** (e.g. morning, lunchtime, after work, before bedtime);
- **the place** (e.g. in the car, at the pub);
- **what you were doing** (eg. drinking coffee) or feeling (eg. feeling anxious or angry)
- **who you were with** (e.g. friends who also smoke); and
- **a score out of 10 for how badly you wanted to smoke** (with zero being not at all and 10 being I would kill for one).

If you keep a diary like this for a week it will give you an insight into what triggers your smoking. Knowing what triggers your desire for a cigarette can be a powerful piece of information to have when it comes time to give them up. It will allow you to plan ahead and know in advance when it is likely you will be around smokers or in situations where you are likely to be tempted to smoke. This knowledge will enable you either to avoid these trigger, to have some strategies in place to strengthen your will power, or to have extra Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) gum, or extra support to help you remain a non-smoker.

## WHY STOPPING SMOKING IS GOOD FOR YOU

Smoking cessation will almost certainly improve your health, not to mention your bank balance!

After you stop smoking, several things will happen: some noticeable, others more subtle, but all of them resulting in your feeling better and strengthening your overall health and well-being:

- After 8 hours your blood oxygen levels will begin returning to normal, although this depends on the amount of damage caused by smoking.
- After 24 hours your carbon monoxide levels in the lungs return to those of a non-smoker and the mucus begins to clear.
- After 48 hours nicotine leaves your body and tastebuds are improved.
- After 72 hours your breathing becomes easier.
- After 2–12 weeks, your blood circulation improves.
- Within a month your blood pressure returns to its normal level.
- After 5 years, the risk of heart attack falls to about half that of a smoker.
- After 10 years, the chance of lung cancer is almost the same as a non-smoker<sup>2</sup>.

## WAYS TO QUIT

Regardless of HIV serostatus, but particularly if you are HIV positive, giving up smoking is the single best step you can take to improve health and reduce your risk of cancer, heart disease and a range of other illnesses. However, as every smoker knows, it's easier said than done. For many smokers it will take several attempts before you succeed. It's not unusual for it to take 10 or more attempts. But don't give up trying just because you didn't succeed last time. Learn from your experience and try again.

If you are thinking of stopping smoking, or have made the decision to stop, it is important to choose a method that suits you and your lifestyle. More importantly, it is necessary to choose one that is safe yet still cost effective. Remember, too, nicotine is highly addictive, so quitting will be difficult. Be wary of any products that offer overnight success, an easy way or a quick fix.

When deciding which strategy to use, bear in mind that research has shown that using combination approaches offer the best long term success rates. So for example, you might decide to cut down your smoking gradually; however, if you cut down AND use nicotine replacement therapy (e.g. nicotine patches, tablets, gum, etc.) then you are more likely to succeed than if you use the cutting down method alone.

You can talk to your doctor for support and suggestions as well. Your doctor can advise you of new and emerging pharmaceutical therapies and treatments that could make quitting even easier.

## STRATEGIES FOR GIVING UP SMOKING

Below are some common strategies to help you give up smoking. It is important to remember that using a number of different strategies to give up smoking works best.

### COLD TURKEY

Cold turkey means stopping smoking, full stop! Not just cutting back, but stopping altogether. According to the Cancer Council of Australia this can be one of the most effective ways of quitting smoking<sup>3</sup>.

### NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (NRT)

Nicotine is highly addictive. Some heavy smokers find this a difficult addiction to break. Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) can help with this.

Despite its name, NRT does not so much replace nicotine, but rather the way people consume it, eliminating the need to inhale toxic tobacco smoke. NRT includes nicotine gum, patches, lozenges, tablets and inhalers. While NRT is expensive in the short term, it will in fact cost you more money to continue smoking. It is best to check with your doctor or pharmacist before commencing NRT.

### PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Medications such as Bupropion™ and Champix™ can help reduce withdrawal symptoms but may not stop them completely. Some of these medications may interact with your HIV treatment and also have other side effects, so it is best to consult your doctor.

### COUNSELLING

Individual or group counselling for smoking cessation are available through a variety of sources, including through many general practices.

Counselling can be extremely useful in helping you to identify and overcome the barriers to quitting, and assist you in developing individually tailored strategies for giving up cigarettes. Proactive telephone counselling, such as provided by QuitLine in Australia, has also shown to be highly effective for many people.

### COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES

While more research needs to be done on the effectiveness of complementary and alternative therapies such as acupuncture, hypnosis, herbs, and meditation, some people find them useful in dealing with withdrawal symptoms and helping them to quit smoking. It is important to talk to your doctor before taking complementary medicines, as some can interact with some HIV antiretroviral drugs.