

Smoking

Why people start smoking

So you have just been to the movies and your hero or heroine has been up there on the big screen looking really cool and fantastic, doing all sorts of amazingly athletic stuff, getting on with great looking girls or guys and then... he or she lights up a cigarette! How un-cool is that??



Well let's get real here

A smoker wouldn't have the breath to do all that athletic stuff.

A smoker would smell like a dead ashtray, so what gorgeous girl or guy would want to be close to that?

A smoker would not have great skin and hair.

It is more than likely that the actor or actress doesn't smoke in real life, because they have to look after their bodies to be able to get parts in movies where they can look fantastic, do all that athletic stuff and look good enough for it to be believable that they would 'get the girl/guy' who looks so amazing.

Tobacco companies sponsor movies, and demand 'product placement' because they are not allowed to advertise their products any more – and they really want to get people to smoke so that they can sell their product! 'Product placement' means getting their product seen in the movie rather than in a separate ad.

So, why do people start smoking?

There are many reasons why young people start to smoke.

Maybe their parents smoked.

Maybe they think they will look like their super-cool hero.

Maybe they feel that it makes them look older and more interesting.

Maybe they believe that smoking can calm them down, relieve stress, help them to concentrate, help them have a good time or any of the dozens of reasons that smokers can come up with to hide the facts.

The fact is that if kids start smoking before they are 15, they are likely to still be smoking as adults.

Why? Because they have become addicted to the drug nicotine, one of more than 4,000 chemicals in cigarette smoke.

Why people continue to smoke

Some of the chemicals in cigarette smoke cause the release of natural sedatives or stimulants into the brain. These can affect the person's mood. Nicotine is an extremely addictive drug, and not having it when you are addicted makes you have cravings, where you feel like you 'have' to have the drug.

Inhaled tobacco smoke is especially addictive because it delivers high doses of nicotine to the brain very rapidly.

People also get into the habit of smoking at certain times, like at parties when friends are smoking... and they can find it is hard to be the non-smoker.

Smoking and its effects

Apart from the smell, taste, effects on hair and skin, and on moods, cigarette smoke has even more unpleasant effects on the body.

Nicotine itself does not cause cancer or lung disease. It is the other things that are in cigarette smoke that cause all the health problems.

The senses of smell and taste are affected. Smokers can't smell how they smell to others, and their taste buds don't work so well, so they can't enjoy food properly.

Smokers are ten times more likely to get heart disease, lung disease, major heart attack or stroke. They are also more likely to develop diabetes.

Smoking is the most common cause of cancers of the lung, throat and mouth.

Female smokers have more trouble becoming pregnant, and have more painful periods. Smoking can harm the baby if they get pregnant and continue to smoke.

Male smokers have a lower sperm count and more abnormal sperm than other men, so it is not going to be so easy for them to have children.

Smokers can also have problems with narrowing of the veins in hands and feet, so blood circulation is poor. This can lead to gangrene and having to have limbs amputated.

Passive smoking – that is, breathing in other people's smoke rather than actually smoking yourself – can also cause health problems.

Anti-smoking laws mean that smoking is not allowed inside most buildings, so smokers have to lurk about outside while their friends are inside having fun.

In South Australia it is now illegal to smoke in a car if there are children in the car.

Smoking - some facts

Cigarette smoking is highly addictive, widely done and very hazardous.

Smoking killed 100 million people in the 20th century, and is predicted to kill 1 billion in the 21st century.

Worldwide, there are about 1.1 billion smokers and there are expected to be 1.6 billion by 2025.

Half of all smokers will die early unless they stop smoking.

What if you don't smoke tobacco?

Some people think that if they don't smoke tobacco, then they won't get the diseases or effects that cigarette smokers can suffer.

Smoking 'herbal' tobacco or cannabis (marijuana, grass or pot) has many of the dangers of tobacco smoking plus more. See our topic on [Cannabis](#) for more information.

Giving up smoking

If you have decided that smoking is definitely something you don't want to start, good!

If you are a smoker already and want to break the habit, our topic on [Giving up smoking](#) may be just what you need to read.

