

The Irreversible Health Effects of Cigarette Smoking

By ACSH Staff — June 1, 1998



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Executive Summary This report examines the irreversible effects of cigarette smoking on various organ systems and challenges the notion that a few years of exposure to smoking will have no lasting adverse consequences. Our hope is to discourage young people from taking up this deadly habit by appealing to their common sense and better judgment, thereby allowing them to choose for themselves not to smoke. We will not recite the familiar litany of smoking-related health problems such as emphysema, cancer, and heart disease. Rather, we will show that smoking cigarettes for as few as five years can have a permanent effect on the lungs, the heart, the eyes, the throat, the urinary tract, the digestive organs, the bones and joints, and the skin even if the smoker quits.

We do not mean to dishearten long-term smokers. Despite smoking's irreversible effects, it would be foolish for a smoker to conclude that, after years of smoking, quitting would do him no good. Many studies prove that tobacco-related health effects decline substantially as time away from smoking increases; some of the benefits begin within months after quitting. But after years of exposure to the damaging effects of tobacco, quitting smokers must realize that they have to be realistic in their expectations of recouping their health.

For our latest work on tobacco issues, please see: <http://www.acsh.org/tobacco> [2]. Also, please like our Facebook page, [Helping Addicted Smokers](#) [3].

For our blog (on tobacco and other issues), please visit: <http://www.acsh.org/blog/> [4]

To learn the specific, detailed health effects of smoking, in our site geared toward teens, check out: <http://theScooponSmoking.org> [5]

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[5] <http://thescooponsmoking.org/>

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