

## Smoking and Stroke

Smoking is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease including stroke and heart attacks. Smokers are up to three times more likely to have a stroke than non-smokers. Smoking is particularly dangerous for people who have high blood pressure. They are five times more likely to have a stroke than smokers with normal blood pressure, and 20 times more than non-smokers with normal blood pressure.

However, once you stop smoking your health improves immediately and you begin to reduce your risk of stroke. If you have already had a stroke you probably know that smoking causes cardiovascular disease that in turn causes stroke. Perhaps you have tried to quit. It is never too late to stop, about 5 years after quitting, your risk of stroke and heart disease are greatly reduced.

## Quitting smoking is the best thing you can do to prevent stroke or a second stroke.

### **It is never too late to stop smoking-the benefits begin as soon as you stop**

Within 20 minutes your blood pressure and pulse rate will return to normal.

Within 8 hours of stopping, the oxygen level in your blood will rise to normal and your carbon monoxide level will fall.

Within 24 hours, the chance of you suffering a stroke and heart attack begins to fall.

Within 72 hours, you can hold more air in your lungs. Breathing becomes easier. Your energy levels increase.

Within days, your blood is less likely to clot.

Over the next few weeks and months your circulation will improve, and your lungs will gradually start to work better.

Within 5 years, the risk of stroke falls to about half that of a smoker.

Within 10 years, you will have about the same risk of stroke as someone who has never smoked.

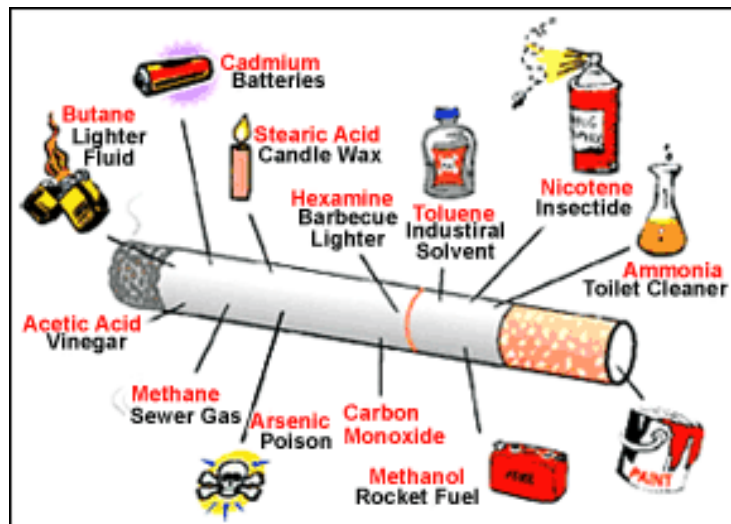
## Smoking and Stroke

There are many benefits including increased energy and you will be free from the worry that you are damaging your health, as well as that of your family and friends.

**Note:** Research conducted by the Framingham Heart Study on smoking and stroke incidence found that stroke risk decreased significantly by two years and was at the level of non-smokers by five years after cessation of cigarette smoking.

### What's in a cigarette?

Over 4,000 chemicals including;



### How does Smoking cause Stroke?

- ✚ Smoking increases the risk of high blood pressure-the single biggest risk factor for stroke.
- ✚ The chemicals in cigarettes include carbon monoxide, arsenic, formaldehyde and cyanide damage the blood vessel walls, this leads to atherosclerosis (narrowing or furring of the arteries). This increases the chances of blood clots forming on the arteries to the brain and the heart. These clots can suddenly block an artery completely causing a stroke.

## Smoking and Stroke

- ✚ Nicotine is a highly addictive drug. It causes your blood vessels to narrow, increases your heart rate and raises your blood pressure. Elevated blood pressure is a major contributory factor to stroke.
- ✚ The carbon monoxide in tobacco smoke is the same type of poisonous gas found in car exhaust fumes; it deprives the blood vessels of vital oxygen. Carbon monoxide joins onto the haemoglobin which carries oxygen around the body in red blood cells. In some smokers, up to half of the blood can be carrying carbon monoxide instead of oxygen.
- ✚ Smoking increases the stickiness of special blood cells called platelets, further increasing the risk of blood clots forming.
- ✚ Smoking increases LDL (bad) cholesterol and reduces HDL (good) cholesterol. High levels of LDL cholesterol are a risk for cardiovascular disease and stroke.
- ✚ Smoking increases the risk of stroke in women using the oral contraceptive pill.
- ✚ Second hand smoke-breathing in someone else's smoke is also hazardous. Recent research suggests second hand smokers were nearly twice as likely to have a stroke as those who did not live or work in a smoky atmosphere.

### Tips for Stopping Smoking

Seven in every ten current smokers say they would like to stop smoking. Stopping smoking is not easy; however, many people have become ex-smokers by following the simple steps below;

#### Prepare to stop

Write down your reasons for stopping and keep the list to hand.

#### Make a date to stop

Pick your day to stop and stick to it.

#### Get support

## Smoking and Stroke

Ask a friend or family for support or to stop smoking with you.

### **Think Positive**

You may find you experience withdrawal symptoms once you stop smoking. These are, in fact, the positive signs that your body is recovering from effects of tobacco. A cough, irritability, and sleep disturbances are some common symptoms. Don't worry, they're all perfectly normal and they will disappear within a week or two.

### **Learn to deal with cravings**

Cravings can often happen during the first few days after stopping. A craving gets worse for three to five minutes and then begins to disappear. So when craving starts, apply the 4d's

**Delay**-at least 3 minutes-the urge will pass.

**Drink** a glass of water or fruit juice.

**Distract** yourself-move away from the situation.

**Deep** breaths. Breathe slowly and deeply.

**Change your routine.**

Smoking is often linked to certain times and situations, such as the first smoke in the morning, such as the first smoke in the morning, and drinking tea, coffee or alcohol. Avoid those situations by doing something different at these times.

**If you are ready to stop call the National Smokers Quitline on 1850 201 203.**