

How Cigarettes Harm Us - From Head to Toe

Tobacco use plays a role in many diseases which ultimately lead to death or disability. With over 4000 chemical compounds present in the inhaled smoke, several of which are *known carcinogens*, it's no wonder that the effects of smoking are so destructive.

What are the two big diseases you think of being related to smoking? Chances are they are lung cancer and emphysema, neither of which is the number one killer of smokers. Heart disease holds first place. Researchers report that worldwide, there were 1,690,000 premature deaths from cardiovascular disease among smokers in the year 2000. In contrast, there were “only” 850,000 lung cancer deaths from smoking in the same year.

The effects of smoking hold additional risks for women. Those who smoke throughout their pregnancies increase the risk of:

- Spontaneous abortion/miscarriage
- Ectopic pregnancy
- Abruptio placenta
- Placenta previa
- Premature rupture of the membranes
- Premature birth

Risks to the foetus include:

- Smaller infant(for gestational age)
- Stillborn infant
- Birth Defects e.g. congenital limb reduction

- Increased nicotine receptors in baby's brain
- Increased likelihood of child smoking as a teenager
- Possible physical and mental long-term effects

Let's take a look at how tobacco affects us from head to toe. You'll probably be surprised by at least a few of the things on the following list that occur due to tobacco.

Hair:

- Smell and staining

Brain and Mental Effects:

- Stroke (cerebrovascular accidents)
- Addiction/withdrawal
- Altered Brain chemistry
- Anxiety about harm caused by smoking

Eyes:

- Eyes sting, water and blink more
- Blindness(macular degeneration)
- Cataracts

Nose:

- Less sense of smell