

# Exploring Myths and Facts About Tobacco Use



**Myth:** Since it is tobacco smoke that contains deadly chemicals, just switch to e-cigarettes and the problem is solved.



**Myth:** It is nearly impossible to quit tobacco or other nicotine products, no matter how many times or how hard you try.



**Fact:** The health effects of e-cigarette use are unknown.



**Fact:** Quitting tobacco products is hard because nicotine is so addictive and people often try to do it on their own without counseling or enough medication, but it is doable, especially with support.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not closely monitor or test e-cigarette ingredients as it does with medications. So, chemicals in e-cigarettes, including nicotine content, can vary greatly. We do not know the long-term effects of using e-cigarettes, but we do know they can release harmful chemicals during use, such as:

- Formaldehyde and benzene, which can cause cancer
- Diacetyl from flavoring, which is linked to lung disease
- Heavy metals, such as nickel, tin and lead

No e-cigarettes have been approved by the FDA to help people quit smoking. Safe options, like nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and other tobacco treatment medications, exist, work and are covered by most health insurance plans.

We are still learning about the health effects of e-cigarettes, including serious conditions, like lung injuries, which have led to some deaths.

- Relapse is not a failure. It takes almost everyone who tries to quit multiple attempts before being successful. Tobacco treatment medications and counseling can double your chances of success.
- Most people try to quit all at once or without help, but evidence shows medication and counseling give people the best chance to become and stay tobacco-free.
- For people who are not ready to quit, NRT can help relieve cravings and discomfort. Using NRT can give people more control in day-to-day activities without worrying about how to get through situations where they cannot smoke.
- Participating in treatment for smoking can help achieve longer-term recovery from alcohol and other drugs.



**Myth:** There is no point in quitting when you have been smoking for so many years.



**Myth:** Long-term use of tobacco products does not always harm everyone.



**Fact:** Quitting smoking will improve your health no matter how old you are or how long you have smoked.



**Fact:** Tobacco kills 480,000 people across the U.S. every year, more than alcohol deaths and drug overdoses combined.

The sooner you quit smoking, the sooner your body can start to heal. You may notice some benefits quickly, but you will see even more over time.

- In a few weeks, you will start to cough less and breathe easier.
- In a year, your risk of having a heart attack will fall significantly.
- In two to five years, your risk of a stroke begins to be about the same as a person who doesn't smoke.
- Over time, your risk for other conditions, including mouth, throat and lung cancer and diabetes, will continue to fall.

Quitting smoking will also help you save money and protect those around you from secondhand smoke.

Tobacco-related diseases can take years to develop. To compare, consider the following:

- 88,000 people die from alcohol-related causes each year.
- 47,000 people died from opioid overdoses in 2017.
- 1,000 people died from benzodiazepine (such as Xanax, Valium and Klonopin) overdoses in 2016.



**Myth:** People who do not use tobacco products every day or who “smoke socially” do not have to worry about the impact on their health.



**Fact:** There is no safe level of tobacco use or secondhand smoke exposure.

Any amount of tobacco use is hazardous to your health.