

Upsides of the Last Puff



Despite the multi-billion dollar "smoking cessation" industry that markets drugs, gums, inhalers, counseling, and a variety of other tools to help smokers quit, the fact remains that the number of smokers in the US has remained fairly constant—around 46 million (20.6% of the population).

What's more remarkable about this is how broadly it is understood that smoking leads to cancer, emphysema, and a variety of other well-documented health risks. In addition to the obvious health benefits of quitting, let's explore some of the other "upsides".

An immediate benefit to folks who quit smoking is money. A pack of cigarettes ranges from \$5.50–\$6.50 in Connecticut. So if you used to smoke a pack a day, you will save \$2,000–\$2,400 during the first year of not smoking. Think of it like receiving a bonus that you can use for a vacation, gym membership, or other healthier, more enjoyable activities.

Air quality skyrockets when smoke is out of the picture. Cigarette smoke contains thousands of toxic or cancer-causing chemicals. Removing the source of this pollution helps clean and purify your own personal

environment, as well as protecting your families, friends, and others from the dangers of secondhand smoke.

And, did you know that the real benefits to your health begin within minutes of quitting (*see sidebar*)? In just five years after quitting, former smokers have a stroke risk close to those who never smoked. In 15 years, their risk of heart disease is essentially the same as non-smokers.

Additionally, women who stop smoking during their reproductive years greatly reduce their infertility risks. Those who stop smoking during pregnancy reduce the chance of having a low-birth weight baby. Parents who stop smoking increase the chances that their children will be non-smokers—helping them avoid many unhealthy habits (such as drinking and drug abuse).

The conversation about smoking has been going on for decades, but the harmful facts have never changed. The good news is that life without cigarettes is achievable—and greatly enjoyable for former smokers. Let's look past the last puff and embrace the healthy changes that are quickly on the way. 🌱

Did you know?

In just minutes, hours and days of quitting, former smokers will enjoy countless improvements to body and soul, including:

- **AFTER JUST 20 MINUTES** = Normal levels of blood pressure
- **IN JUST EIGHT HOURS** = Decreased levels of carbon monoxide in the blood
- **AFTER ONE DAY** = Declined risk of heart attack
- **IN TWO DAYS** = Better sense of taste and smell
- **AFTER THREE DAYS** = Improved lung capacity
- **AFTER A FEW DAYS** = Increased levels of oxygen to the muscles allowing most former smokers to exercise more vigorously
- **AFTER THREE MONTHS** = Improved circulation and lung function, and reduced respiratory symptoms such as coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath
- **AFTER NINE MONTHS** = Decreased risk of lung infection, as lungs now are able to clean themselves again
- **AFTER ONE YEAR** = Greatly lowered risk of coronary heart disease—bringing the risk down to half that of a typical smoker's