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Benefits of Quitting Tobacco If You Have Cancer

There are many benefits of quitting tobacco after you've been told you have cancer. Quitting can lead to longer survival and a better quality of life. Tobacco use can also worsen the side effects of some cancer treatments.

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Benefits of quitting tobacco

If you quit tobacco, you might have:

- Better response to your cancer treatment
- Fewer and less-serious side effects from treatment
- Faster recovery from treatment
- Lower risk of infection
- Easier breathing
- More energy

You will also be less likely to get a second cancer in the future.

Risks of continuing to use tobacco

- Worse side effects from surgery, such as heart and lung problems and a slower recovery
- Worse side effects from chemotherapy, such as infection, fatigue, heart and lung problems, and weight loss
- Worse side effects from radiation therapy, such as mouth sores, loss of taste, worse voice quality, and bone and soft tissue problems
- Your cancer coming back after treatment
- Other serious illnesses caused by tobacco use, such as heart and lung diseases or a second cancer

Myths about quitting tobacco

Here are some of the most common myths about quitting tobacco when you have cancer.

Myth: There is no point in quitting smoking now that I have cancer.

Fact: It's never too late to quit smoking.

People who quit smoking after a cancer diagnosis have many benefits that people who continue to smoke don't:

- Longer life
- A better chance of successful treatment
- Fewer side effects from treatment
- Faster recovery
- Better quality of life

Myth: Quitting smoking is too stressful for people getting treated for cancer.

Fact: The benefits outweigh the challenges.

Nicotine addiction is hard to break. And you may find the withdrawal process tough. But the benefits of quitting tobacco outweigh the challenges. Ask your doctor or cancer care team about [how to best quit and manage your symptoms](#)¹.

Myth: People can quit by themselves. They don't need help from a health care professional.

Fact: Support increases your chances of quitting.

Many people can and do quit by themselves. But you can increase your chances of quitting with the help of your health care team. They can offer support, information, and medication to help you quit for good.

Myth: Most medications used to quit smoking don't work.

Fact: There are prescription medicines that have been shown to help people quit tobacco.

Many studies show that several medications can lower nicotine withdrawal symptoms and increase your chances of quitting. Your health care team can recommend the right

References

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Written by

Developed by the [American Cancer Society medical and editorial content team](#) with medical review and contribution by the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO).

This content has been developed by the American Cancer Society in collaboration with the [Smoking Cessation Leadership Center](#)⁵ to help people who want to learn about quitting tobacco.

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