



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

10 Myths About Smoking

1

MYTH: "I've smoked for so long the damage is already done"

FACT: The body starts to heal the moment you quit smoking.

The longer you smoke the more damage you will do to your body. However, the moment you quit, the body starts to reverse much of the harm quite rapidly. Within just one year of quitting your risk of heart attack decreases by 50% - after five years your risk of stroke is the same as a non-smoker.

2

MYTH: Quitting will make me gain weight

FACT: Not all former smokers gain weight, and there are ways to prevent weight gain.

Nicotine is an appetite suppressant so when you quit your appetite will improve. Also, your sense of smell and taste improve so you can enjoy the food you are eating a lot more. Some people who quit smoking gain between 5 to 10 pounds in the first one to two months, however this is not true for everyone. Those who are less addicted to nicotine (light smokers) will likely gain less than former heavy smokers.

Here are some ways to prevent weight gain during your quit journey:

- Add an extra 30 minutes of exercise a day, even walking can help.
- Make changes to your diet, eating less fast food and sugar and more veggies and fruit.
- Talk to your health care provider (doctor, nurse, health lead) to help you make the changes you need to stay at a healthy weight.

3

MYTH: Quitting Cold Turkey is the only way to do it

FACT: Smokers have quit successfully using many different ways. You can find the option that works best for you.

Your choice of quitting plus a combination of Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) and counselling can double your chances of quitting successfully. NRT refers to the use of nicotine patches, lozenges, gum or inhaler to help with cravings (due to the nicotine addiction) during your quitting journey. NRTs are covered through the BC Smoking Cessation Program and First Nations Health Benefits. Ask your pharmacist, nurse or doctor for more information. For counselling support go to www.quitnow.com

4

MYTH: An occasional cigarette is fairly harmless

FACT: Research shows that even a few cigarettes a day cause serious risk to your health

Each cigarette you smoke hurts your lungs, heart and the cells throughout your body. Not only heavy or long-time smokers get tobacco-related diseases like lung cancer, heart attack or stroke. Anyone who smokes or inhales commercial tobacco smoke is putting their health at risk.

5**MYTH: Smoking helps me relax and helps manage my stress****FACT: Smoking actually increases heart rate and blood pressure and does not decrease stress.**

Research has found that people who quit smoking over time feel more relaxed than while they were smoking. Smoking actually only relieves the short-term craving for nicotine (the addictive substance in tobacco). This feels relaxing at that moment but you are really just relieving the tension caused by your addiction. Once you quit you can find healthy ways to manage stress. Ask your doctor or health care provider for support.

6**MYTH: Quitting Smoking could make my mental health condition worse****FACT: Quitting smoking actually makes you feel better!**

The feelings you have when you are quitting may be due to nicotine withdrawal. Withdrawal symptoms may include: irritability, difficulty concentrating, and feelings of anxiety or depression. This is not a sign that your mental health is getting worse! Given the many benefits (e.g., better health, saving money), quitting smoking is one of the most important things a person can do improve their mental health. Ask your health care professional for support.

7**MYTH: "I smoked during my last pregnancy and my baby was okay, I can smoke during this pregnancy too"****FACT: Every pregnancy and birth is different**

Every pregnancy, birth, woman and baby are unique, so you cannot expect the same outcome each time. Women who smoke during pregnancy have a higher risk of health problems for themselves and their babies. Smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of pre-term birth, low birth weight, and birth defects of the mouth and lip. It also increases the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

8**MYTH: "Quitting smoking will be too stressful on my baby"****FACT: Quitting smoking is actually the best thing you can do for your health and the health of your baby.**

Quitting smoking helps to protect you and your child from serious health risks and complications and will not increase stress on your baby.

9**MYTH: E-cigarettes are safe****FACT: E-cigarettes are not harmless.**

Though the aerosol (vapour) of e-cigarettes contains fewer toxic chemicals than regular cigarettes, they are not harmless. Smoking e-cigarettes (vaping) can expose you to harmful chemicals - such as formaldehyde and acrolein - and metals such as lead, nickel, tin and aluminum, which can cause lung damage. Vaping can also deliver nicotine to your body and cause physical addiction. Most importantly we do not yet know the long-term health effects of vaping. Do you want to risk it?

10**MYTH: Smoking is less harmful than alcoholism****FACT: More people with alcoholism die from smoking-related diseases than from alcohol-related problems.**

Alcohol and tobacco addiction are co-related: people who are dependent on alcohol are three times more likely to be smokers. Therefore, it is important to support tobacco cessation for people who are also dependent on alcohol to prevent the risk of several conditions, including lung cancer, heart disease and - ultimately - premature death.