

If you stop smoking right now:

Within 20 minutes: Your blood pressure and pulse rate drop to normal. Body temperature of hands and feet increases to normal.

Within eight hours: Carbon monoxide level in the blood drops to normal and oxygen levels in blood rise to normal. Smoker's breath disappears.

Within 24 hours: Chance of heart attack decreases.

Within 48 hours: Nerve endings start regrowing. Ability to taste and smell enhances.

Within three days: You'll breathe easier.

Within two weeks to three months: Circulation improves. Walking becomes easier. Lung function increases up to 30 per cent.

Within one to nine months: You'll cough less. Sinus congestion and shortness of breath decrease. The cilia that sweep debris from your lungs will grow back. You'll feel more energetic.

Within one year: Excess risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker.

Within two years: Your heart attack risk drops to near normal.

Within five years: Lung cancer death rate for average former smoker decreases by almost half. Stroke risk is reduced to that of a non-smoker five to 10 years after quitting. Risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, and esophagus is half that of a smoker's.

Within 10 years: Lung Cancer death rate is similar to that of a non-smoker's. Precancerous cells are replaced. Risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, kidney and pancreas decreases.

Within 15 years: Risk of coronary heart disease is that of a non-smoker's.

Sources: American Cancer Society; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention