

you TAKE my BREATH away

Tobacco and Your Lungs

Asthma. Emphysema. Lung cancer. Do these sound fun to you? When you smoke, or are even around people who smoke, you're putting your lungs at a tremendous risk. It starts with just coughs, wheezing, and asthma. As your immune system weakens, the coughing gets worse. Soon after, your lungs become so scarred and damaged, and you develop emphysema or COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease). Tar, nicotine, and many of the other deadly chemicals found in cigarettes or smokeless tobacco just collect on your lungs until they're unrecognizable.

your appearance

People may not be able to see your black, diseased lungs or your blood that's full of clots, but they still may be able to tell you use tobacco just by looking at you. In addition to your teeth that may be full of yellow stains or even missing altogether, your skin is a good indicator whether or not you smoke. Smoking causes you to have dry, wrinkly skin because of the lack of oxygen. Smoking damages your blood vessels, which in turn diminishes the amount of oxygen that can travel throughout your body. Even though your skin is actually your largest organ, your body focuses on getting as much oxygen as it can to your brain to keep you alive. Because oxygen and other vitamins aren't getting to your skin, it'll start to sag and wrinkle.

The same thing goes for your fingernails. It only takes a few months for your fingernails to turn yellow. This is due to two reasons: lack of oxygen and the nicotine and tar that's in the cigarette. As you hold the cigarette, bits of tar and other chemicals will gradually make your fingernails look yellow and crusty.

Tobacco is the cause for all of these awful side effects; don't let it affect you! Don't even start using tobacco. It's just not worth it.



HOW DOES TOBACCO AFFECT YOUR BODY?

Let's test your knowledge.

1. What is the main component in tobacco that makes it addictive?
a. Dopamine b. THC
c. Nicotine d. Triglycerides
2. Secondhand smoking is only responsible for 340 deaths each year in the United States, so it's not really worth being concerned over.
a. True b. False
3. Heart attacks and strokes can be caused by tobacco use because smoking can damage blood vessel cells and can make blood more likely to clot.
a. True b. False
4. Cigarettes contain poisonous ingredients, such as:
a. Arsenic b. Ammonia
c. Formaldehyde d. All of the above
5. Which of the following is NOT an effect from smoking?
a. Increased risk of stroke b. Difficulty Breathing
c. Whiter teeth d. Wrinkling skin

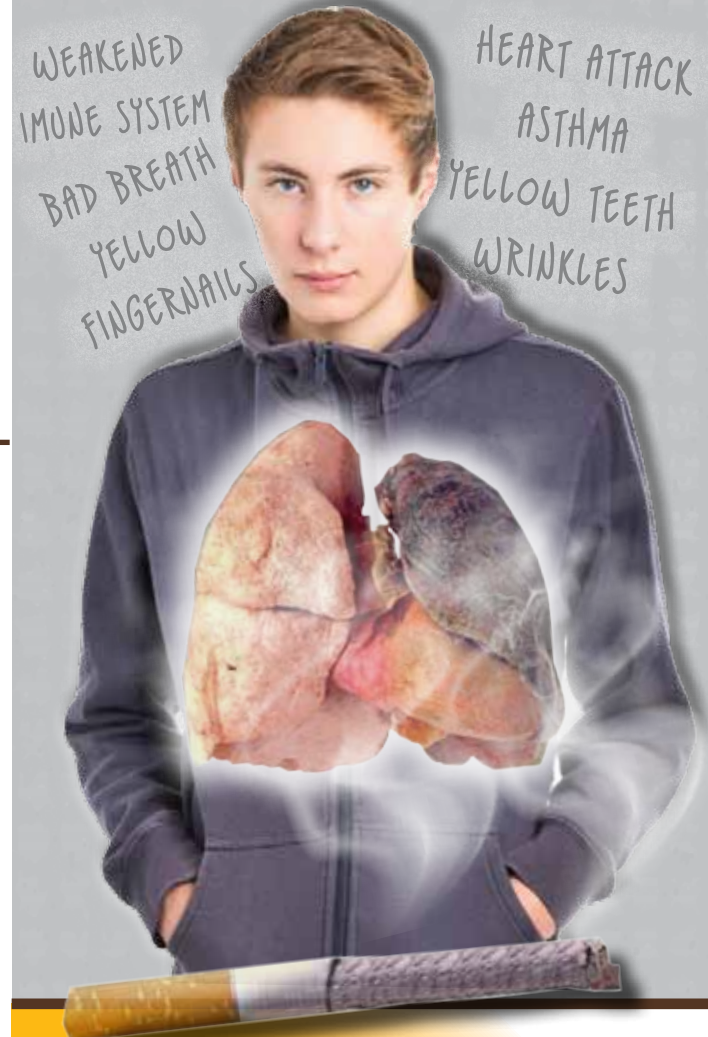
ANSWERS: 1. c, 2. b, 3. a, 4. d, 5. c



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CAUSE AND EFFECT

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TOBACCO AND YOUR BODY



EFFECTS ON YOUR BRAIN

One of the major components in tobacco—whether it’s being smoked, chewed, or even sniffed—is nicotine. Nicotine is very addictive, and as you use tobacco, the nicotine immediately courses through your body and into your brain. It then causes your brain to release a chemical called dopamine. Our brains already produce dopamine on their own, especially when we do something fun that we enjoy. The problem with tobacco is that it makes your brain produce more dopamine, so eventually you don’t make enough of it on your own. Dependence to nicotine can begin pretty quickly, and not long after, you become addicted. As you need the tobacco to feel happy or relaxed, your brain becomes tolerant to the dopamine released, so you may be more likely to try harder drugs. Another deadly side effect of tobacco use on your brain is the increased chance of having a stroke. A stroke happens when blood can’t get to your brain either because something is blocking the blood vessel or the blood vessel has burst. Paralysis, weak muscles, difficulty speaking, memory loss and death are all possible side effects of a stroke. You may ask, “Well what does smoking have to do with strokes?” Very simply—a lot. Smoking can cause a lot of smaller problems that may eventually lead to a stroke. These “small” problems that are caused by smoking are:

- High levels of triglycerides, which are a type of fat found in blood
- Damaged cells that line the blood vessels, making them more likely to burst
- Higher levels of buildup plaque (fat, cholesterol, calcium and more), which can cause a blockage
- “Sticky” blood—blood becomes more likely to clot, which can also cause a blockage.

your heart

Think “sticky blood” and damaged blood vessels only damage the brain through strokes? Think again. Your heart is an extremely important organ, and it’s only job is to pump blood. Just as you’re more likely to suffer from a stroke because of smoking, you’re also more likely to have a heart attack. Cigarette and cigar smoke deplete the oxygen in your blood, which makes your heart have to work even harder to pump oxygenated blood throughout your body. That extra strain on your heart can be devastating, and experts say that smoking is the number one preventable cause of heart disease. Even secondhand smoke—breathing in cigarette smoke from someone else’s cigarette—is extremely dangerous and is the culprit in nearly 34,000 deaths from coronary heart disease every year. People who may never have lit up in their life but are around those who do, either through their family members or their jobs, are at serious risk.

“Lucky for me, I just chew tobacco. That won’t put me at risk for heart disease because I’m not dealing with any smoke.” Wrong! Even smokeless tobacco can raise your blood pressure and heart rate. Long-term use can put you at the same risk of a heart attack as smoking cigarettes.

effects on your mouth, throat and esophagus

Cigars, cigarettes, and smokeless tobacco all have way more chemicals than just nicotine in them. Cigarettes, for example, have over 7,000 chemicals like ammonia, arsenic and formaldehyde. Ammonia is used in cleaning fluids, arsenic is a chemical found in rat poison, and formaldehyde is used to embalm dead bodies. Do you really want to be ingesting that? Those chemicals cause your teeth to become yellow and rotten, and your breath begins to smell like something died in there. Eventually your teeth may even fall out completely. You also put yourself at risk for gum disease and cancers of the lips, mouth, or throat. Smokeless tobacco like chewing tobacco and snus are predominantly responsible because they come into direct contact with your mouth.



LIFETIME OF SECRETS

Linda’s Story

Linda had spent her entire life around people who used tobacco. Her dad smoked a cigar after dinner every night, her mother smoke cigarettes throughout the day, and her brother practically had a spit cup glued to his hand for his chew tobacco. When she was 13, she decided she wanted to try smoking like her mom. As she picked up her first cigarette from the cigarette carton, she thought, “Maybe I shouldn’t. My mom’s always complaining about how she can’t breathe very well.” She mulled it over for a moment longer but then finally took her first inhale. She was used to the smell, but the smoke as it filled her lungs caused her to choke a little. She coughed a few times but took another hit. When her mother walked in, she half expected her to be upset and to snatch it out of her hand. Her mother only asked her for a lighter.

Twenty years passed, and Linda was at her dead-end job that she didn’t really enjoy, but it helped barely pay the bills and support her smoking habit. She woke up one day, and with a cigarette in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other, she sat on her back porch before she had to get ready for the day. Walking up the stairs to her bathroom made her feel exhausted, and she began to feel lightheaded as she couldn’t seem to get enough air. After she finally made it upstairs to her vanity, she looked at her reflection. While she was only 33, she could’ve easily passed for a 60 year old. Her teeth were a greyish-yellow, and her skin was full of deep wrinkles and creases. She began to try to justify that they were just laugh lines—that she had lived a full life full of laughter. When she really thought about it though, she realized her life was mediocre. After paying her bills, almost every dollar she earned went to buying cigarettes, all of her relationships failed because of her smoking habits, and those wrinkles, her yellow teeth, and even her yellow fingernails were all indicative of a life that could’ve been so much more. “Is it too late for me?” she began to cry to herself as she struggled to catch her breath.