

Tobacco smoking and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people

- Tobacco smoking is the leading preventable cause of death and disease in Australia
- Tobacco smoking decreases the body's supply of oxygen and causes an increase of carbon monoxide. This decrease of oxygen can affect the health and wellbeing of every part of the body
- Tar is deposited in the lungs every time tobacco is smoked. This has significant effects on breathing and lung function

Smoking and LGBT people

Research shows that up to 30% to 40% of LGBT people are current smokers, compared to 13% of the general population.

Among older LGB people (45 – 65) in NSW;

12% of LGB people smoke compared to 6% of heterosexuals

52% had ever smoked compared to 41%

Data on transgender people shows rates of 35% among women and 44% among men.

Higher smoking rates among LGBT people may be related to social settings that are often associated with smoking or 'minority stress' associated with experiences of discrimination and marginalisation.

Tobacco contains at least 4000 chemicals

Nicotine is not known to cause cancer. However it is the chemical in tobacco that is responsible for the pleasure experienced when smoking and also causes dependence.

There are at least 60 known harmful chemicals in tobacco such as benzene, naphthalene, cyanide, ammonia and many more. Some cigarettes are flavoured with mint, menthol, vanilla, ginger, cinnamon and sugar to improve the taste. They are also designed to burn constantly to encourage smokers to smoke more and finish the cigarettes. Smoking any kind of tobacco product is dangerous including flavoured tobacco, pouch tobacco, so called 'light' cigarettes, cigars and 'chop chop'.

Benefits of quitting Tobacco Smoking

Quitting at any age has health benefits. After **12 hours** the carbon monoxide level in the blood reduces dramatically; **2-5 days** nicotine by-products will be out of your system and your sense of smell and taste will improve. Quitting smoking brings significant short and long term health benefits.

- Increased immune functioning and life expectancy
- Improved fitness and quality of life
- Improved health of skin, hair and nails
- Improved erectile capacity
- Faster healing and recovery from surgery
- Reduced anxiety, depression and stress
- Reduced risk of cancers and heart and lung diseases (eg. stroke, vascular disease and emphysema)
- Reduced risk of blindness and dental problems
- Decreased risks of complications in pregnancy
- A smoker spending \$20 a day will save more than \$7,000 a year on cigarettes not smoked



Quitting

Quitting is not easy and may take a variety of attempts before being successful. Remember to not be too hard on yourself and set realistic goals. Each person is different and each quit attempt is different. Each quit attempt can be a learning experience.

Cutting down to quit can be a less challenging way to quit than stopping cold turkey. However, it is important when cutting down to quit to be aware of the way tobacco smoke is inhaled. Sometimes smokers will inhale more deeply when cutting down and this can defeat the purpose of cutting down.

Changing habits around Smoking

- Identify triggers such as using alcohol and other drugs, social events, stress and boredom
- Try to avoid smoking in the house or car
- Keeping cigarettes in a less convenient location (for example, the boot of the car)
- Delay smoking after meals
- Separate smoking from coffee or tea breaks

Distract yourself by

- Going for a walk or having a shower instead of smoking
- Listening to music, drinking water and eating fruit or vegetables
- Taking time out to breathe, meditate or exercise and find different ways to reduce stress

Nicotine Replacement Therapy

- You can still smoke and use Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRTs), such as patches, lozenges, gum, inhaler, oral strips or mouth spray. Patches are available at a decreased cost on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)
- NRTs can help with cravings and withdrawal symptoms by providing a safe regulated dose of nicotine to the body without all the toxic chemicals in cigarettes
- Using NRTs can increase the chances of quitting
- Combining nicotine products can be very effective for cutting down to quit
- NRTs are more effective when combined with changes of habits and routines

Medications for quitting

Your doctor can prescribe up to three months of Nicotine patches and there are two other approved prescription medications. Speak with your doctor to see if they are suitable for you. These medications are more effective when combined with changes to habits and routines. Quitting smoking can also make some medication more effective, for example, medications to relieve pain, insulin, anti-coagulants, anti-psychotics and benzodiazepines, so it is a good idea to review medications with your doctor when you quit.

Resources

Quitline provides professional individualised encouragement, support and information in relationship to your quit attempts. Increasing your chances of quitting and staying quit.

Call Quitline on 13 7848
(13 QUIT)

Quit now and My Quit buddy, Smart phone applications.

quitnow.gov.au

Information about quitting
icanquit.com.au
quitnow.gov.au

Australian Council on Smoking and Health
acosh.org

National LGBTI Health Alliance
lgbthealth.org.au

The LOVE Project is an ACON initiative aimed at creating better conversations and improved social engagement with older LGBTI community members. By understanding people's needs and preferences the LOVE project aims to facilitate greater social connectivity, improve social inclusion and provide appropriate health information for LGBTI elders.

facebook.com/LivingOlderVisiblyEngaged | twitter.com/LOVEproject | Loveproject.org.au

Publication date: April 2015

This project is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health.

