

SMOKING CLOGS YOUR ARTERIES



**Front of Cigarette Pack
(representation only)**



**Back of Cigarette Pack
(representation only)**

Smoking cigarettes is known to contribute to the development of atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis occurs when there is narrowing and clogging of the arteries which reduces blood supply, and the amount of oxygen available, throughout the body.¹

Cigarette smoke damages the cells lining the blood vessels and makes clots more likely to form in blood vessels. Smoking cigarettes also contributes to the build up of fat deposits that collect on the inner lining of the blood vessels. This leads to scar-like tissue and atherosclerotic plaque.²

Atherosclerosis is the main underlying problem in *cardiovascular diseases* such as heart disease, stroke and other forms of blood vessel disease such as peripheral vascular disease and abdominal aortic aneurysms.^{3,4}

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in Australia. Coronary heart disease is the largest single cause of death and stroke is the second largest cause of death in Australia.⁴

There are about 170,000 Australians living with atherosclerosis.⁵ Smoking causes 43% of atherosclerosis among males and 35% among females.⁶

Compared to non-smokers, someone who has ever smoked is 40% more likely to develop atherosclerosis⁷ and a current smoker is 150% (2.5 times) more likely to develop the disease.⁶

Quitting smoking will reduce your chance of developing heart disease. After one year of not smoking your risk of heart disease is halved. Fifteen years after stopping smoking your risk of heart disease is the same as a non-smoker.⁸

Your risk of stroke also decreases after quitting. Between five and 15 years after quitting your risk of having a stroke is the same as a non-smoker.¹

Men who smoke are also more likely to develop impotence than non-smokers, due to reduced blood flow to the penis caused by atherosclerosis. Even without atherosclerosis, smoking can lead to the temporary constriction of blood vessels (vasoconstriction) which also reduces blood flow to the penis.²

Also see the fact sheet on peripheral vascular disease for more information.

Decided to quit smoking? For help, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or call the Quitline on 131 848 or visit the Quitline web site at www.quitnow.info.au.

Sources

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