

Your body will begin to repair itself as soon as you stop smoking, and you will feel the health benefits for the rest of your life. Precisely what happens and when depends on how much you have smoked, for how long and how old you are.

- 20 minutes after stopping** Your blood pressure and pulse rate will return to normal and the circulation will improve in your hands and feet, making them warmer.
- 8 hours after stopping** Blood levels of nicotine and carbon monoxide will be cut by half and oxygen levels will be normal. Your chances of a heart attack start to fall.
- 24 hours after stopping** Carbon monoxide will be eliminated from your body and your lungs will start to clear out the contaminated mucus and other smoking debris.
- 48 hours after stopping** Your body will be free of nicotine and your senses of taste and smell improve.
- 72 hours after stopping** You will be breathing more easily as the airways in the lungs will be starting to relax. You will begin to feel more energetic.
- 2–12 weeks after stopping** Your circulation is improving generally, making walking and other exercise easier.
- 3–9 months after stopping** Your lung function will have increased by up to 10%. That will result in less coughing and wheezing and fewer breathing problems.
- 5 years after stopping** Your risk of having a heart attack will fall to about half of that of a smoker.
- 10 years after stopping** Your risk of lung cancer will have fallen to half that of a smoker and your risk of a heart attack will be the same as if you'd never smoked.

So, how do you respond to a smoker when they say “I’ve been smoking for a long time. I’ve probably done so much damage to myself that there’s no point quitting now.”
