

The following statements present a powerful message about the benefits to health of stopping smoking, and of stopping as soon as possible:

On average, smokers die 10 years earlier than non-smokers.

On average, those stopping at 30 years, regain all of those ten 'would-be lost' years ie they die no earlier than those who never smoked.

On average, those stopping at 40 years, 'regain' 9 of those ten 'would-be lost' years.

On average, people stopping at 50 years, 'regain' 6 of those ten 'would-be lost' years.

On average, people stopping at 60 years 'regain' 3 of those ten 'would-be lost' years.

The health benefits of stopping smoking start as soon as the last cigarette is put out:

*After 20 minutes:* Blood pressure and pulse rate return to normal. Circulation improves in hands and feet making them warmer.

*After 8 hours:* Oxygen levels in the blood return to normal. Chances of a heart attack start to fall.

*After 24 hours:* Carbon monoxide is eliminated from the body. The lungs start to clear out the mucus and other debris.

*After 48 hours:* Nicotine is no longer found in the body. Taste and smell improves.

*After 72 hours:* Breathing becomes easier as breathing tubes relax. Energy levels increase.

*After 2 – 12 weeks:* Circulation improves throughout the body making walking easier.

*After 3 – 9 months:* Breathing problems such as cough, shortness of breath and wheezing improve. Overall lung function is increased by 5 – 10%.

*After 5 years:* Risk of a heart attack falls to about half of that of a smoker.

*After 10 years:* Risk of lung cancer falls to about half of that of a smoker. Risk of a heart attack falls to about the same as someone who has never smoked.

*(Based on information from the 1990 US Surgeon General's Report. From Helping smokers to quit © Quit 1994)*