

# FACTS ABOUT NICOTINE

## WHAT IS NICOTINE?

Also known as cigarettes, ciggies, tabs, darts, durries, rollies, smokes, fags, butts, snus, zyn, pouch. Nicotine is a stimulant drug, found in tobacco products. Cigarette smoke contains more than 7000 chemicals, many of which are harmful. They include: carbon monoxide, tar, acetone, lead, mercury, chromium and cadmium, hydrogen cyanide, ammonia, polonium 210. Over 70 of these chemicals have been found to be carcinogenic (cancer-causing).

Tobacco products include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, loose leaves and snuff. Usually it is smoked in cigarettes. Nicotine is also inhaled when included in liquids in e-cigarettes or “vapes”. Smokeless tobacco products, such as leaves can be chewed, while snuff – ground wet tobacco is placed in the mouth and ground dry tobacco is snorted. Snus or nicotine pouches are used by placing them between the lip and the gum of the mouth and can contain synthetic nicotine.

## EFFECTS OF NICOTINE

Effects depend on the person (age, weight, size, health and tolerance), as well as the strength, the amount smoked, and if smoked with other drugs, including alcohol. When smoked, effects are felt quickly. The effects also go away quickly, so people feel like they need another dose.

Short-term effects, desired and undesired, may include... initial mild stimulation and euphoria

- relaxation, more alert and greater concentration
- increased heart rate and blood pressure, lightheaded
- reduced sense of smell and taste and appetite
- increased phlegm production
- coughing, dizziness, headache, watery eyes
- nausea, stomach ache, possible vomiting
- bad breath, stained teeth and fingers
- shortness of breath, may trigger asthma
- reduced oxygen to brain and lungs

- constricted blood vessels

Long-term effects may include...

- nicotine dependency
- premature aging, weakened immune system
- reduced physical fitness, reduced fertility
- bone, circulatory, dental and ear or eye problems
- increased risk of heart and lung disease and stroke
- diabetes and cancer
- premature death from these diseases

## HOW LONG DOES NICOTINE STAY IN YOUR SYSTEM?

Depends on use and person. Generally, nicotine can be detected in blood within 1 to 3 days, but cotinine which is formed when nicotine enters the body, can be detected up to 10 days. Cotinine can be detected in urine up to 2 days and in saliva up to 4 days. Nicotine can be detected in hair up to 90 days, sometimes longer, up to 1 year.

## TIPS FOR REDUCING RISK

There is no safe way to use nicotine. Whether smoking low-tar, light, filtered, unfiltered, factory made cigarettes or rolling your own – the health risks are there. The only way to be safe is not to smoke. If you choose to smoke, the following will help reduce risk:

**Before:** try and delay having a cigarette, do some other activity to take your mind off smoking. Consider Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) to reduce or quit smoking. Remember, while vaping can help reduce nicotine intake, it also poses health risks due to the harmful chemicals that vapes contain.

**During:** go slow, don't inhale deeply, smoke less often, set a limit and keep to it.

Avoid: mixing nicotine with medications and other drugs, including alcohol or cannabis, smoking too often, sharing a cigarette, harming others through second-hand smoke, making it a habit – smoking when stressed, as a reward or when doing a particular activity.

## IS NICOTINE USE BECOMING A PROBLEM?

It may be a problem if you agree with any of these statements:

- I struggle to limit or reduce smoking
- I spend a lot of time smoking
- I often feel strong urges to smoke
- I have developed a tolerance to nicotine, so I need to smoke more to feel effects
- I have withdrawal symptoms – irritability, anger, anxiety, depression, increased appetite, difficulty concentrating or sleeping, headaches, coughing, mouth ulcers, sore throat, aches and pains, upset stomach and constipation.

## TIPS FOR PROBLEMATIC NICOTINE USE

- seek support from a health professional, as well as from family and friends
- consider Nicotine Replacement Therapy
- contact free support by calling the Quitline (13 78 48)
- start doing activities you enjoy that don't involve smoking
- look after yourself – get enough sleep, follow a healthy diet, adopt a balanced lifestyle
- set some personal goals.

## NICOTINE AND THE LAW

It is illegal to sell or supply tobacco products to people aged under 18. There are laws and regulations that restrict smoking in public areas such as shopping centres, eating and drinking venues and workplaces. It is illegal to smoke in a car when children under the age of 16 are present or when the car is being used for business and someone else is in the vehicle. A prescription from a doctor is needed for the purchase of nicotine e-cigarettes or “vapes.” Smokeless tobacco products including chewing tobacco and snus have been prohibited in Australia since 1991.

### FOR SUPPORT – CALL DRUG ARM

CALL DRUG ARM CENTRAL INTAKE ON 07 3620 8880 DURING BUSINESS HOURS TO ACCESS FREE SUPPORT OR EMAIL [INTAKE@DRUGARM.COM.AU](mailto:INTAKE@DRUGARM.COM.AU). FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES, CALL 1300 656 800 OR EMAIL [INFO@DRUGARM.COM.AU](mailto:INFO@DRUGARM.COM.AU).

### FOR 24/7 SUPPORT CALL:

ALCOHOL & DRUG INFORMATION SERVICE: 1800 177 833 (QLD) AND 1800 250 015 (NATIONAL).