

# Smoking

## What's in cigarettes?

Cigarettes (also called smokes, chop-chop and ciggys) are made from dried tobacco plant leaves<sup>1</sup>, but cigarette smoke contains more than 7000 chemicals<sup>2</sup>. Many of these chemicals like arsenic and ammonia, are harmful to your body and health<sup>2</sup>.

## Key health messages



Smoking harms both you and those around you.



Quitting can be hard, but there is help available.



Cigarette smoke contains over 7000 chemicals, many of which can cause cancer and other illnesses

## Do many young Aboriginal people smoke?

The 2018-19 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey found that 10% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people between 15 and 17 smoked daily<sup>3</sup>. This has been falling for the last 20 years but is still higher than the smoking rate for non-Aboriginal young people. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (85%) between 15-17 years have never smoked<sup>4</sup>, which helps them to lead long and healthy lives.



## Why do young people start smoking cigarettes?

Young people smoke for many reasons<sup>4-6</sup>, such as:



## What can happen to you if you smoke?

Nicotine is the main addictive drug in tobacco. When nicotine reaches your brain, it causes the release of dopamine – a chemical that makes you feel good for a short time. Over time, nicotine changes how your brain works and causes cravings for more nicotine. Young people have a greater chance of addiction as their brain is still developing<sup>7-8</sup>. You'll also be harming those around you when you smoke. By choosing not to smoke, you can set an example for your family and friends. Smoking is also expensive.

## What does the law say?

It is illegal for anyone to offer or sell tobacco products to those under 18. In NSW, smoking is not allowed in many enclosed public places, such as cinemas. It is also banned in some outdoor spaces like bus stops. If you smoke in these spaces, you can be fined up to \$300, given a warning or formal caution<sup>10</sup>.

### Short term effects

- Bad breath
- Stained teeth and fingers
- Fatigue and reduced energy
- Coughing
- Shortness of breath
- Blood pressure and heart rate increase

### Long term effects

- Lung diseases
- Cancer, e.g., stomach, or in other areas of the body
- Cardiovascular diseases such as heart disease
- Stroke
- Respiratory diseases
- Diabetes
- Gum disease
- Losing your sight
- Premature aging
- Poor physical fitness

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## True or false?

*Rolling my own cigarettes is safer than using store bought cigarettes* ➔ **False**, smoking tobacco is harmful no matter how you do it. Hand rolled cigarettes are just as harmful as store bought cigarettes<sup>11-12</sup>.

*Most people I know smoke, and I've already started ... it's too late for me* ➔ **False**, even if you've been smoking for years, it's never too late to quit. The effects of quitting can be felt in as soon as one week after quitting<sup>13</sup>.

*I only smoke every now and then which isn't harmful* ➔ **False**, there is no safe level of smoking. Nicotine is very addictive and the more you smoke, the greater the chance of harm.

## Where can I find more information?

[health.nsw.gov.au/tobacco/Pages/aboriginal-communities-smoking.aspx](https://health.nsw.gov.au/tobacco/Pages/aboriginal-communities-smoking.aspx) - More information from the NSW Government on how you can quit smoking

[yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au/a-z-of-drugs/Pages/tobacco.aspx](https://yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au/a-z-of-drugs/Pages/tobacco.aspx) - Easy-to-read information for young people about smoking and nicotine addiction.

## Where can I get help to quit?

- **Have a yarn with your doctor or Aboriginal Health Worker**
- **Call Quitline on 13 7848**  
– a free and confidential service (you can ask to speak to an Aboriginal counsellor if you wish).
- **ICanQuit website**  
– visit [www.icanquit.com.au](http://www.icanquit.com.au) to create your own plan. There is also information and tools to help you quit.
- **QuitTxt**  
– visit [www.quit.org.au/quittxt](http://www.quit.org.au/quittxt), they can send you messages to stay on track.

## References

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