



What is the relationship between tobacco use and cancer?

Tobacco products contain chemicals that can cause cancer. Tobacco smoking is known to cause at least 12 different types of cancer. One out of every three cancer deaths in the United States occurs because of smoking. For cancer patients and survivors, smoking increases your risk of death by roughly 50%.

How does smoking affect cancer progression and treatment?

Smoking directly affects how your cancer progresses and how well you respond to treatment.

- It can speed up tumor growth and increases risk for cancer spreading to other areas of your body.
- It can cause a poorer response to treatment like radiation therapy and chemotherapy. Smoking can also make some cancer drugs less effective.
- Smoking can cause treatment complications. It increases side effects caused by treatment, making it more likely that you will need to be hospitalized. It also increases your risk of surgical complications like infection.
- You are more likely to develop other tobacco-related diseases like heart problems. This can worsen your cancer prognosis and increase your risk of death.

How will my treatment and health outcomes improve if I stop smoking?

- You will have better treatment outcomes and fewer treatment-related side effects.
- You improve your cancer prognosis and are more likely to survive 3- and 5-years after diagnosis.
- If you need surgery, your surgical wounds will heal better and you reduce your risk for surgery problems. The earlier you stop smoking, the lower your risk becomes.
- You are less likely to have cancer reoccur or to develop a new cancer unrelated to your original cancer diagnosis.
- You cut your risk of death from cancer and other causes in half.

I want to quit smoking — how do I get started?

- Talk to your VA primary care or mental health provider about cessation medications and counseling to treat your tobacco use.
- Call VA's tobacco quitline at **1-855-QUIT-VET** (1-855-784-8838) Monday–Friday. Available in English & Spanish.
- Sign up for VA's SmokefreeVET text messaging program — text the word **VET** to **47848** (manda **VETesp** al **47848** para ayuda en español) or visit smokefree.gov/VET.

