

THE **M5** PROJECT

MEN'S PREVENTIVE HEALTH

# HELPING MEN HELP THEMSELVES

**STOP SMOKING** – it's the only healthy option



[M5project.com.au](http://M5project.com.au)

## Did you know:

- Men have a higher death rate than women for lung cancer?
- Men die about 5 years younger than women?
- Men are less likely to visit a GP?

The M5 Project believes you can be the one to break the cycle. Start by making your health a priority and stop smoking – it's the only healthy option.

Here are some myth busting facts about men and smoking ...

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***Myth 1: I'm fit and healthy, smoking won't affect me.***

**Fact: Smoking reduces your fitness.**

Carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke attaches readily to the substance in the blood responsible for transporting oxygen to cells (haemoglobin). This means the blood is less able to carry oxygen around the body. Reduced oxygen uptake results in less oxygen being available for working muscles, which in turn reduces endurance. During exercise smokers are more easily exhausted, suffer shortness of breath, have reduced endurance and poor visual judgment, and are slower to react.

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***Myth 2: Smoking helps me relax.***

**Fact: Most smokers find it's actually the time they take to have a cigarette that's relaxing, not the cigarette.**

The physical effects of smoking are similar to the physical symptoms of stress. Chemicals in cigarette smoke increase heart rate and cause constriction of blood vessels. If a smoker is in a stressful situation, taking time out to have a cigarette may make him or her feel more relaxed. This relaxing effect is due to the 'time out', not the cigarette!

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***Myth 3: Smoking and sex... they just complement each other, right?***

**Fact: One of the most harmful things a man can do to his penis is light up a cigarette.**

Impotence is more common among men who smoke. Nicotine in cigarettes deteriorates blood vessels, including the tiny, fragile blood vessels in the penis. These blood vessels are necessary to sustain an erection.

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***Myth 4: Only women need to worry about smoking and pregnancy.***

**Fact: It takes two sexually healthy people to make a baby.**

Men who smoke are more likely to have fertility problems. Sperm produced by a smoker is a different shape and less mobile than sperm produced by nonsmokers. Male

smokers produce less sperm, and secretion of the male sex hormone testosterone is affected by the chemicals in tobacco smoke.

When a woman is pregnant, smoking by the father may result in a low birth weight baby and a higher risk of the baby dying after birth. These effects may be due to the pregnant mother's exposure to environmental tobacco smoke or from direct damage to the sperm.

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**Myth 5: Most men smoke.**

**Fact: The majority of men have never smoked or are ex-smokers.**

In 2007, 28% of men (aged 14+ years) were ex-smokers, while most men (51%) had never smoked. Only 18% of men in Australia are daily smokers.

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**Myth 6: Quitting is impossible.**

**Fact. Quitting may be difficult, but it's definitely possible!**

Some people quit after the first time, going 'cold turkey' and never looking back. For others, quitting is a bit more difficult and it may take several attempts before being completely successful. It is important to remember that while you may 'slip up' and have a cigarette, this is no reason to give up on your quit attempt altogether. Remind yourself why you want to quit.

**Remember the 5 Ds:**

**Delay** – for a few minutes and the urge will pass

**Drink water** – sip it slowly

**Deep breath** – take three slow, deep breaths

**Do something else** – to take your mind off smoking

**Dial the Quit hotline on 131 848**

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**Myth 7: Quitting now won't help me – the damage is already done.**

**Fact: The benefits of quitting are almost immediate!**

- Two hours after quitting, nicotine is cleared from your system
- After 6 hours, your heart rate will slow down and your blood pressure will drop slightly
- Within 1–2 days carbon monoxide and nicotine are completely cleared from your body; your lungs will function better and endurance will improve
- After 1 month your blood pressure returns to normal and exercising becomes much easier
- After 3 months your lungs are able to clean themselves and blood flow improves
- 1 year after quitting smoking the risk of lung cancer is reduced and the risk of heart disease is almost half that of someone who continues to smoke.

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