



## Smoking and Mental Illness

People living with mental illness have a very high rate of smoking. A study by the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported that 44.3 percent of all cigarettes in America are consumed by individuals who live with mental illness and/or substance abuse disorders. This means that people living with mental illness are about twice as likely to smoke as other persons. A positive note is that people who live with mental illness had substantial quit-rates, which were almost as high as the group without mental illness.

### The Connection between Mental Illness and Smoking

While we still have a lot to learn about why people smoke, there is plenty of information to support the serious health risks of smoking. So while there may be good reasons why you were attracted to smoking, the key is to figure out ways to increase rates of quitting. Nicotine isn't a health problem on its own, but when smoked and combined with hundreds of other chemicals that are present in cigarettes, the practice of smoking is toxic.

Psychologically, all addictions soothe cravings. People often find themselves relaxed and less tense when their addiction is fed. This is true of cigarette smoking. Smoking can also be part of a social norm, one where people in your social circle all hang out and smoke. Some people who live with mental illness learned to smoke in a hospital or in group-living settings. These examples help illustrate how the mental health culture needs to move forward to reduce the tie between socialization and smoking.

### Effects on Symptoms and Medications

Research shows that people living with mental illness do not have worse symptoms after they quit. It is understandable that this is a concern with quitting smoking. Quitting is hard work, and it may take many efforts to be successful. Be sure to get support, talk with your health care provider, set a quit date and explore the NAMI Hearts & Minds tools for success at [www.nami.org/heartsandminds](http://www.nami.org/heartsandminds).

### Benefits of Quitting

There are immediate and long-term benefits to quitting smoking. Within minutes of smoking the last cigarette and beyond, the body begins to restore itself.

Time after quitting	Benefits to your Health
20 minutes	Your heart rate and blood pressure drop
12 hours	Carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal
Two weeks to three months	Your circulation improves and your lung function increases
One to nine months	Coughing and shortness of breath decrease; lung function normalizes
One year	Excess risk of heart disease is cut in half
Five years	Your stroke risk is that of a nonsmoker
10 years	Lung cancer death rate is half of a smokers
15 years	Risk of heart disease is that of a nonsmoker

### Quitting Tips and Support

Take three steps to support your health and wellness:

Get Ready—set a date.

Get medicine—talk with your health care provider.

Get help—call 1 (800) QUIT-NOW or find a local support group near you.

There is good evidence that simple phone support may make a real difference for people who want to quit smoking. 1 (800) QUIT-NOW is a great resource for individuals who want to quit smoking. It is free, and many people have found this resource helpful. In addition, some smoking cessation programs offer free text messages that help provide ongoing support and coaching.

To quit permanently, you may need to rely on more than one method at a time. Methods may include step-by-step manuals, phone support, self-help classes, counseling, nicotine replacement therapies (NRT) and/or prescription medications.

## Second-hand Smoke

There are two types of second-hand smoke: mainstream smoke—the smoke that is exhaled by a smoker—and sidestream smoke, the smoke that comes from a burning cigarette, cigar or pipe. Second-hand smoke is inhaled by nonsmokers who are around smokers. It lingers in the air after cigarettes, cigars or pipes have been extinguished. Exposure to second-hand smoke is called involuntary smoking or passive smoking. Second-hand smoke can cause or exacerbate a wide range of adverse health effects, especially in children.

Second-hand smoke has been classified by the EPA as a known carcinogen. It contains hundreds of chemicals, including formaldehyde, benzene, vinyl chloride, arsenic ammonia and hydrogen cyanide.

According to the American Lung Association, second-hand smoke causes almost 50,000 deaths in adult nonsmokers in the United States each year, including approximately 3,400 from lung cancer and as many as 69,600 from heart disease. It can also irritate the lungs causing coughing, wheezing, increased phlegm and a feeling of breathlessness. Children who are exposed have an increased risk of asthma attacks, ear infections and lung diseases (i.e., pneumonia and bronchitis).

To protect yourself and your family from second-hand smoke, do not allow anyone to smoke in your home. If you have loved ones or coworkers who smoke, make sure they know that you would prefer them to not smoke around you and your family. Do not smoke or allow others to smoke in your car. Choose restaurants and bars that are smoke-free. Make sure your child's day care, school and after-school programs are smoke-free. Finally, ask your employer, clubhouse, hospital or day program to create a smoke-free policy.

## Additional Resources

It is often hard to stop smoking, but you can do it. It may help to know that there are many organizations that

NAMI Hearts & Minds program is an online, interactive, educational initiative promoting the idea of wellness for individuals living with mental illness. This Fact Sheet is offered for informational purposes only. It does not intend to recommend specific treatment or strategies. Individuals should always engage with their health care provider before you quit smoking.

offer information, counseling and other services on how to quit and where to go for support. Here are some to get you started:

*2009 Smoking Cessation Toolkit for Persons with Mental Health Issues*

University of Colorado Department of Psychiatry  
[www.tcln.org/bea/docs/Quit\\_MHTollkit.pdf](http://www.tcln.org/bea/docs/Quit_MHTollkit.pdf)

*A complete and helpful guide to advance the culture and to help individuals quit. Includes many references and summaries of the literature.*

Smoking Cessation Leadership Center  
[www.smokingcessaitonleadershi.ucsf.edu](http://www.smokingcessaitonleadershi.ucsf.edu)

*This national center has many excellent resources, toolkits and references to help people living with mental illness to quit smoking.*

*Tobacco-free Living in Psychiatric Settings: A Best Practices Guide Promoting Wellness and Recovery*  
[www.nasmhpd.org/general\\_files/publications/NASMHPD\\_toolkitfinalupdated90707.pdf](http://www.nasmhpd.org/general_files/publications/NASMHPD_toolkitfinalupdated90707.pdf)

*State commissioners of mental health and state medical directors provide tips for advancing the culture of mental health toward smoke-free living.*

American Cancer Society  
(800) ACS-2345 or (800) 227-2345  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

American Heart Association  
(800) AHA-USA1 or (800) 242-8721  
[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)

American Lung Association  
(800) LUNG-USA or (800) 548-8252  
[www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org)

National Cancer Institute  
(877) 448-7848 for smoking cessation help  
(800)-4-CANCER or (800) 422-6237  
[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
(800) CDC-INFO (800) 232-4636  
[www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit\\_smoking/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/index.htm)

Smokefree.gov  
(800) QUIT-NOW or (800) 784-8669  
[www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov)

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For more information about smoking and mental illness, or the NAMI Hearts & Minds program visit

