**Why it’s Always Worth Stopping Smoking if You Have Cancer**

You may be wondering if you already have cancer, does it really make any difference if you quit smoking? Hasn’t the damage already been done? Why add the stress of quitting to the stress of coping with cancer treatments?

There are very good reasons *why anyone* with cancer should try to quit. Stopping smoking is a benefit for any type of cancer, whether it is early-stage or an advanced-stage cancer. Benefits extend to treatments you are having, whether that means chemotherapy, surgery, radiation therapy, targeted therapies or even just quality of life comfort care.

* **Quitting smoking improves cancer survival and lowers recurrence:**

Based on studies of the most common cancers, it appears that kicking the habit can raise the survival rate for many people living with cancer and improve quality of life.

* **Quitting lowers the risk of death from other causes:**

Smoking increases your risk of developing more than *fifty* serious health conditions. This means that quitting not only improves the survival rates for most people living with cancer but improves survival rates overall.

* **Risk of surgical complications is lowered:**

Smoking raises the risk of complications from general anaesthesia. During surgery, smoking increases the risk of developing life-threatening heart related or respiratory complications.

After surgery, continuing to smoke results in poorer wound healing and an increased chance of developing an infection. The nicotine and carbon monoxide contained in tobacco cause a narrowing of the blood vessels which reduces the blood flow to tissues. Restricted blood flow hampers the repair of the surgical wound.

* **Radiation therapy works better:**

For radiation therapy to have maximum effect, cells require an efficient blood flow. Smoking causes less blood flow to cells which makes tumour cells more resistant to radiation.

* **Smoking increases side effects from radiation:**

Conditions such as mouth sores, loss of taste, dry mouth, loss of voice quality, bone and soft tissue damage and fatigue can last longer than they do for people who do not smoke.

* **Smoking can interfere with chemotherapy effectiveness:**

Smoking can alter the metabolism of chemotherapy drugs, resulting in either higher or lower levels of drugs. This could decrease the effectiveness of the chemotherapy drug or increase the risk of side effects and complications.

* **Smoking can make side effects of chemotherapy worse:**

Some chemotherapy side effects appear to be worsened by continuing to smoke. They include fatigue, weight loss and increased risk of infections.

**Improve Your Quality of Life When You Quit Smoking**

Smoking has been shown to reduce a person’s quality of life after a diagnosis of cancer in several ways. Quitting could improve some of these symptoms:

* **Fatigue**: Smoking appears to increase fatigue which many people say is their worst symptom of cancer.
* **Breathing:** Difficulties such as shortness of breath, wheezing, coughing and hoarseness are much worse for people who smoke.
* **Pain:** After a cancer diagnoses smoking is linked to more severe pain and as a result a reduced ability to function. Quitting smoking may be as effective as some drugs in reducing pain.
* **Quality of Life:** stopping smoking improves the ability to carry on with everyday activities which can increase overall well-being.

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