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ulcers, cataracts on the eye, wrinkles, yellow skin, a hairy tongue and make you look much older than you are.

The more you use tobacco, the greater the risk to your health. And because it is so addictive, many people end up using tobacco much more often than they had first planned.

Even if you don't use tobacco, breathing in secondhand smoke can lead to the same health problems. Secondhand smoke has all of the dangerous chemicals found in tobacco and can cause heart disease and lung cancer. It can also cause ear infections, asthma and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) in children.

### **How can you protect yourself from the dangers of tobacco?**

If you don't use tobacco, then don't start! Tobacco is very addictive and once you start it can be very hard to quit. Those who

do use tobacco should quit now. Doing so can have immediate health benefits and add years to your life. Even if you have used tobacco for years, quitting can still lower your risk for many health problems. It is never too late to quit!

It is also important for non-smokers to avoid secondhand smoke as much as possible. Create a smoke-free policy in and around your home and make sure everyone follows the policy. When out in public, spend time at smoke-free places and try to stay away from those who are smoking. It is especially important for the following high-risk individuals to avoid secondhand smoke altogether:

- Infants and children
- Persons with heart and lung disease
- Pregnant women
- Seniors or anyone in poor health

Contact your local Breathe California office at 1-877-3-BREATHE to learn about classes, self-help programs and other resources to help protect yourself and your loved ones from the dangers of tobacco.

### **FAST FACT**

**1 out of every 5 deaths in the United States is the result of a tobacco-related illness.**

*Source: National Cancer Institute, U.S. National Institute of Health*



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# Tobacco



## What is tobacco?

Tobacco is a green, leafy plant that is grown in warm climates. After tobacco is picked, dried and ground, it can be made into many products, such as cigarettes, cigars and chewing tobacco. Tobacco products are very addictive and cause serious health problems. Tobacco use is also the #1 preventable cause of death in the United States, killing close to half-a-million people each year.



## What's in tobacco?

Tobacco products can contain up to 4000 chemicals, 200 of which are deadly and 60 of which can cause cancer. The most dangerous is **nicotine**, a powerful chemical that makes tobacco products addictive and causes heart problems. Tobacco products also have ammonia, cyanide, arsenic and thousands of other poisons.

In addition, all of these chemicals are found in *tobacco smoke*. Tobacco smoke also contains **tar**, which sticks on and damages lung tissue, and **carbon monoxide**, a deadly poison that destroys red blood cells.

These chemicals can cause deadly health problems. Even if you do not use tobacco, breathing in secondhand smoke (also known as environmental tobacco smoke) can be just as dangerous.

## What types of tobacco products are there?

There are many kinds of tobacco products, which can be either chewed, smoked or inhaled. The most common forms of tobacco include:

**Cigarettes** - paper-wrapped tobacco leaves that are smoked, usually through a filtered end. Cigarettes are the most popular tobacco product (47 million Americans smoke cigarettes) and the number one cause of lung disease in the United States.

**Cigars** - tightly-rolled, unfiltered bundles of tobacco leaves which are lit and smoked. While many users do not inhale the smoke, cigars can still harm the lungs as well as the mouth, gums and throat.

**Chewing tobacco** - a small tobacco plug that releases flavored tobacco juice when chewed. Using chewing tobacco can seriously harm the mouth, gums and throat.

### FAST FACT

**Smoking is responsible for 87% of all lung cancer cases and 30% of ALL cancer deaths.**

*Source: National Cancer Institute, U.S. National Institute of Health*



**Snuff** - a ground-up, smokeless tobacco product that comes in many different forms and flavors. Users take a small amount of snuff, known as a "dip," and place it between the cheek and gum. Like chewing tobacco, snuff can cause mouth, gum and throat disease.

Other common types of tobacco products include: **hookah**, flavored tobacco in a water pipe that is smoked through a hose; **blunts**, marijuana rolled in a cigar or tobacco wrapper; **bidis**, small unfiltered cigarettes that are also flavored; and **cloves**, a cigarette that blends tobacco, cloves and a "flavored sauce." No matter what form it comes in, tobacco can be deadly!

**No matter what form it comes in, tobacco can be deadly!**

## How does tobacco use affect your health?

Tobacco is not safe for anyone. When tobacco products are used, thousands of dangerous chemicals attack various parts of the body:

**Lungs** - Smoking any type of tobacco can harm the airways and decrease airflow. This can lead to chronic coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and lung infections. Over time, smokers are at a very high risk of getting deadly forms of lung disease, such as emphysema and lung cancer.

**Heart & Cardiovascular System** - Chemicals found in tobacco can enter the blood stream, where they can cause high blood pressure, circulation problems, strokes and heart attacks.

**Mouth, Gums and Throat** - Tobacco use can cause bad breath, tooth decay, cavities, stained teeth and gum disease. There is also a risk of getting cancer in the mouth, gums and throat, especially among smokeless tobacco users (who chew or suck on tobacco) and cigar smokers (who often hold the smoke in their mouth).

**Pregnancy** - Tobacco is EXTREMELY dangerous to pregnant women as well as their unborn children. Tobacco use can lead to miscarriage, premature birth and infant death.

**Other Health Effects** - Tobacco use can lead to cancer of the stomach, kidneys, pancreas and bladder. It can also cause

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