

**TeensHealth.org**

A safe, private place to get doctor-approved information on health, emotions, and life.

## Smoking and Asthma

### Does Smoking Make Asthma Worse?

Yes. If you have asthma, smoking is especially risky because of the damage it does to the lungs.

Smoke irritates the airways, making them swollen, narrow, and filled with sticky mucus — the same things that happen during an asthma flare-up. That's why smoking can cause asthma flare-ups (or "attacks") to happen more often. They also might be more severe and harder to control, even with medicine.

### Why Should I Quit Smoking?

You may have started smoking because friends do or because you grew up in a house where other people smoked. No matter why you started, if you're thinking about quitting, it would probably help your asthma.

Here are some other reasons to quit:

- Smoking can undo the effect of any long-term control medicine you're taking.
- Smoking can force you to use your quick-relief medicine more often.
- Smoking can disturb your sleep by making you cough more at night.
- Smoking can affect how well you do in sports or other physical activities.
- Worst of all, smoking can send you to the ER with a severe asthma flare-up.

If you decide to quit, you don't have to go it alone. Get support from other people — like friends, family, or other smokers who are trying to quit. Ask your doctor about medicines or things you can do to crave cigarettes less. Your doctor wants to help you quit!

### Can Secondhand Smoke Affect My Asthma?

Even if you don't smoke, you may still run into smoky situations at parties, events, or even at home. Secondhand smoke is a known asthma trigger. You'll want to avoid it as much as possible if you have asthma.

If you hang out with smokers or have a family member who smokes in the house, you're likely to have more frequent and severe asthma symptoms. That might mean more medicine and more trips to the doctor's office or ER.

There's not much you can do about other people's behavior. But let your friends and family know that what they're doing is making your asthma worse. Ask them not to smoke in your house or car.

### Is Vaping OK for People With Asthma?

Some people with asthma might think that e-cigarettes ("vaping") are a safe alternative to smoking. E-cigarettes don't fill the lungs with smoke, but do put nicotine in your system. Besides being an addictive drug, nicotine is also toxic in high doses, and raises blood pressure and heart rate.

Experts also agree that the vapors from e-cigarettes are harmful not only to those to vape, but to those around them.

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