



Most people know that smoking is risky. What they might not know is that it's even riskier for HIV+ smokers than for HIV- smokers. If you're living with HIV or AIDS, the good news is that newer treatments are helping HIV+ people live longer. But that also means you have to think about your long-term quality of life. It means doing everything you can to keep your immune system strong. Eating right, getting exercise, and quitting smoking are three of the most important things you can do to protect your health.

How does quitting smoking help people who are living with HIV or AIDS?

- Cigarette smoke contains carbon monoxide, also found in car exhaust. Carbon monoxide robs the body of oxygen. Quitting smoking gives your body more oxygen, making it harder for HIV to thrive.
- Nicotine narrows the blood vessels, so that some areas of the body don't get enough blood. Quitting smoking allows blood to travel more freely wherever it needs to go, delivering oxygen and nutrients to the body's cells.
- When you smoke, Vitamins A, E, and C get wasted repairing the damage caused by cigarettes. When you quit, these vitamins are more available to help fight infections.
- Quitting smoking may lower your risk of developing thrush, oral hairy leukoplakia, emphysema, bacterial pneumonia, and PCP (pneumocystis carinii pneumonia).
- Quitting may reduce your risk of developing certain cancers, such as lung cancer, stomach cancer, and cancer of the mouth.
- For those with HIV and high cholesterol, quitting smoking may reduce the risk of heart disease.