

Effects of cigarette smoking on being active

Smoking cigarettes reduces your fitness.

How often do you see elite athletes, football or basketball players smoking on the sidelines? Most probably never. This is because sports people care a lot about their health and fitness, and most know cigarette smoking damages their performance.

Smoking significantly reduces the body's fitness and ability to filter inhaled air.

When people who smoke play sports, poisons from cigarettes reduce their ability to perform. The poisons which really hurt sports performance are carbon monoxide, nicotine and tar.

Carbon Monoxide causes:

- Swelling of the respiratory tract lining, which restricts the air moving into and out of the lungs. This results in less air being drawn into the lungs, and less oxygen being available for working cells;
- Reduced ability of the haemoglobin (the substance in our blood which brings oxygen to all body cells) for oxygen to bind to. This happens because carbon monoxide attaches to haemoglobin much more easily than oxygen. This makes the heart work harder;
- Reduced ability of the muscle cells to take up oxygen. This means muscles don't function as well and reduced sports performance;
- Damaged vision.

Nicotine causes:

- Increased heart rate, which means the smoker's heart has to work much harder to produce the same effect as a non-smoker's heart;
- Constriction of the blood vessels, leading to reduced blood flow and increased blood pressure.

Tar causes:

- Reduced elasticity of the lungs, resulting in less air being breathed in and out.

Being active is a lot harder if you smoke.

When being active, those who smoke

- Are more easily exhausted;
- Suffer shortness of breath
- Have reduced endurance
- Are slower to react
- Have poorer visual judgement.

A person who smokes can not run or exercise as well as a person who doesn't smoke. The immediate effects of smoking on the body make it more difficult for the body to work at its best level. Even after just one day of not smoking, more oxygen is available to the blood and physical performance improves.

Benefits of stopping smoking:

- Within one to two days, carbon monoxide and nicotine will be cleared from the body;
- After one month, blood pressure returns to normal and lung function improves;
- After three months, the lungs are able to clean themselves and blood flow improves.

