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SMOKING AND LUNG CANCER RISK

[A-](#) [A](#) [A+](#)  [Home](#) > [Health Hub](#) > [Health Library](#) > [Smoking and Lung Cancer ...](#)[Why Does Smoking Increase Lung Cancer Risk?](#)[Lung Cancer on the Rise in the UAE](#)[What Can be Done?](#)[Think You Might be at Risk?](#)[Lung Cancer Screening](#)[The Bottom Line – its Time to Quit](#)[Download as PDF](#)[Share this Article](#)

Smoking And Lung Cancer Risk

Smoking is the greatest risk factor for lung cancer. With increasing rates of smoking in the Middle East, the incidence of the disease is on the rise. We take a look at the link between smoking and lung cancer.

Smoking is responsible for more than 85% of all lung cancers. The smoke in tobacco contains over 7,000 chemicals and 60 different substances, called carcinogens, which are toxic and known to be cancer producing.

Doctors warn that if you smoke around 25 cigarettes a day, the risk of lung cancer could be increased by around 25 times. And the longer and more often that you smoke, the higher the risk.

Cigarettes aren't the only culprit. Other tobacco products such as shisha, medwakh, pipes and cigars all increase the risk of lung cancer developing. Smoking tobacco can also increase the risk of other cancers, such as mouth and esophageal.

Why Does Smoking Increase Lung Cancer Risk?

When we inhale tobacco smoke, the chemicals and carcinogens it contains enter our lungs. These can damage the DNA within the cells that line our airways. Our body can repair this damage but eventually, it becomes unable to and cancer cells form.

The most common type of lung cancer is called non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC), which either begins in the lining of the lungs or the flat cells inside our airways – both are usually linked to smoking.

Small cell lung cancer (SMLC) is less common than NSCLC but is a more aggressive form of the disease and is almost always linked to smoking.

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Unfortunately, it is not just smokers who are at risk – long-term exposure to secondhand smoke can also put you at risk of lung cancer.

Lung Cancer on the Rise in the UAE

The World Health Organization states that globally, lung cancer is the most common cause of cancer death in men and women. In the UAE, it is the second most common cancer among males and the leading cause of all cancer-related deaths.

Smoking rates of all forms of tobacco are higher in the UAE than the global average, increasingly among younger generations, putting lots of young people at risk of lung cancer in the future.

What Can be Done?

The best way to reduce the risk of lung cancer is by quitting smoking.

Not only does quitting immediately decrease the risk, it improves many other aspects of your health. It drastically decreases the risk of heart disease, lowers blood pressure and heart rate, and decreases the risk of many other types of cancer.

Think You Might be at Risk?

If you smoke, have smoked in the past 15 years, have smoked shisha or medwakh for 20 years, or have smoked at least one pack of cigarettes a day for 30 years, then you are at an increased risk of lung cancer. Anyone over the age of 50 is also at a higher risk.

Lung Cancer Screening

Lung cancer often has no signs and symptoms in the early stages, meaning many cases are diagnosed once the cancer has spread and treatment is harder. However, for anyone at risk of lung cancer, the good news is that the disease can be detected through [routine screening](#).

Screening involves testing healthy patients, who may be at increased risk of lung cancer, when no signs or symptoms are present. The aim of screening is to find the cancer when it is in the early stages so it can be treated and cured.

Programs such as Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi's award-winning cancer screening program offer the latest screening technology to help diagnose lung cancer early and improve outcomes and treatment options for patients.

The Bottom Line – its Time to Quit

Smoking significantly increases your risk of lung cancer, but it's never too late to quit and help your body recover.

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