



**Yukon**  
Health and Social Services

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## Did you Know?

Nicotine levels in cigarettes have increased a lot over the last six years. Smokers now get about 10% more nicotine than they did in the past. This means it's easier to get hooked, and it's harder to quit. Of 116 brands tested, 92 had more nicotine in 2004 than in 1998, and for 52 brands, the increase was more than 10 percent! (Full article: <http://www.mass.gov/dph/media/presrel.htm>)

# QuitPack News

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During the QuitPack interviews, you asked us for more information on the effects of smoking on breast-feeding and on over-the-counter and prescription medication. You also asked for smoking stats from other countries and links to graphic images showing you the effects smoking can have on your body. We are still working on adding more humour, and you can help us out. If you know a joke that you would like to share, if you would like to know more about a certain topic, or if you have any other comments or suggestions, please let us know.

## Smoking and Breast Feeding



For every family, adjusting to a new child is a stressful time. There's so much to learn, and so much to do. A new mother may find herself smoking cigarettes as a way of coping with her new lifestyle, or as a reward for her hard work.

Breast feeding gives babies the best start in life. If you are a breast feeding mother who smokes, here is some information that may be helpful to you:

- Nicotine can decrease the amount of milk that you produce
- Dangerous chemicals found in cigarettes may make their way into the breast milk.
- Babies breast fed by mothers who smoke may have lower levels of certain vitamins, which are important for their health and development.
- Breast milk that contains nicotine doesn't taste as good – babies may fuss or become irritable during feeding, or even reject the breast all together.

All parents try to do what's best for their babies. If the time is right for you, the best choice is to quit smoking. This way your baby will not be exposed to second-hand smoke and your breast milk will be nature's best. The good news is that breastfeeding mothers who want to quit smoking may find this is an ideal time to do so. The hormones and chemicals released during breast feeding may blunt the worst of the withdrawal symptoms. A nicotine patch can also help – the amount of nicotine released is less than that taken in by smoking. And you can further reduce the nicotine in your breast milk by wearing the patch only some of the day.

If quitting is not an option right now, you are probably wondering if it is better to give up breast feeding and switch to formula. The answer is clear: breast milk is far superior to baby formula. **The benefits of breast feeding are so great that you should continue to breast feed even if you continue to smoke.** Babies who are only fed breast milk for at least the first six months are better protected against respiratory infections. After that, every day you continue to breast feed is an added bonus! Ideally, a baby should be breast fed for one year.

If you continue to smoke, here are some tips that can help reduce the effect of smoking on your baby:

- Make your home and car smoke free (see the June newsletter for suggestions). Smoke outside and ask other smokers to do the same thing.
- Avoid taking your baby into smoking environments.
- Smoke AFTER feeding, not before or during. Try for a 90 minute interval between having a cigarette and breast feeding. This can be difficult with a young baby who is feeding frequently, but may be possible once the baby has established routines.
- Avoid vegetables containing considerable amounts of nicotine - eggplant, tomatoes and cauliflower. Fortunately there are lots of other vegetables and fruits that are perfectly fine – aim for 5 to 7 servings per day.

**REMEMBER!** It's a matter of give and take. If you wouldn't give it to your baby, don't take it while you're breast-feeding!

(If you require more information about breast-feeding, contact Whitehorse Health Centre in Whitehorse or your local Health Centre in the communities)

## Smoking and Medications

Nicotine is the primary active ingredient in tobacco. Nicotine can reduce the effectiveness of other drugs that you may be taking.



If you are taking prescription or over-the-counter drugs on a regular basis, keep reading.

Nicotine can neutralize the effects of some medications. For example, medication for high blood pressure lowers blood pressure by opening the blood vessels. Nicotine has the opposite effect: it narrows blood vessels. Therefore, smoking reduces the effectiveness of blood pressure medication. The same kind of effect happens with asthma medications.

Nicotine can also effect how some drugs get used by your body. For example, nicotine reduces the amount of insulin your body absorbs. This means that smokers with diabetes may need to take more insulin than they would if they didn't smoke.

You may get more nicotine than you bargained for if you smoke while using nicotine patches, gum or inhaler. The more products you use that contain nicotine, the greater the danger of a nicotine overdose.

These are only a few examples of how nicotine can negatively affect medications you may be taking. If you are taking prescription or over-the-counter medication on a regular basis, please discuss possible side effects with your family doctor or a pharmacist. Always read the instructions that come with medications, and get answers to any questions you may have from your doctor or pharmacist.

**Remember: Nicotine also changes how your body absorbs alcohol and caffeine.**

Nicotine can change the effectiveness of:

- Blood pressure medication
- Asthma medication
- Birth control pills
- Anti-depressants
- Beta blockers
- Blood thinners
- Some pain killers
- Anti-psychotic medication

There are around 1.3 billion smokers in the world, of which almost 1 billion are men.<sup>1</sup> This represents about one third of the global population aged 15 and over and the vast majority of these people, around 84% or 1 billion people live in developing countries.

## Smoking Statistics by Country (2003)

Country	Total Adult (18 years+)	Male Adult	Female Adult
Canada	17.4	18.8	15.9
Germany	33.9	37.1	30.5
France	25.4	30	21.2
Sweden	16	14	19
Russian Fed.	35.8	61.3	15
Great Britain	26	28	24
USA	17.6	19.8	15.4
Italy	24	31.3	17.2
Ecuador	4.8	7.9	1.9
Mexico	8.3	12.5	4.5
China	36	63	4

Source: World Health Organization Tobacco Free Initiative Regional Databases ([http://www.who.int/tobacco/global\\_data/regional\\_databases/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/tobacco/global_data/regional_databases/en/index.html))



### Websites of the Month

You asked us to provide you with some gross images that show the effects smoking can have on your body. You want it, we got it. Here are some links to websites that have some graphic images:

- [www.smokerslungs.com](http://www.smokerslungs.com)
- [www.tobaccofacts.org](http://www.tobaccofacts.org)
- [www.tobacco-facts.info](http://www.tobacco-facts.info)