Sheryl Swarner

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Smoker’s lungs and Recovery

Our lungs are very vital organs that are made up with connective tissue. The lungs work with the contractions of our diaphragm in order to let us inhale and exhale properly. The lungs are where gas exchange takes place and where oxygen is absorbed through the alveoli and into the blood stream. Oxygen from our lungs is transferred through red blood cells that run through blood vessels.

The long-term effects of smoking can cause anything from preventing the lungs from developing completely to possible death if the person does not choose to quit smoking. According to the CDC website 14 out of 100 Americans are addicted to nicotine from smoking in the US based off a study done in 2018. Over time lungs develop tar from the cigarette smoke and there can be severe tissue damage. These affects from smoking are ones that will stay with the person after they’ve quite smoking. Loss of teeth, gum damage, and discoloration of the tongue are other effects that will remain permanent. Stepping away from the addiction of nicotine from cigarettes is never a walk in the park, but with strong determination it could potentially save a person’s life.

The process of recovering from smoking, according to an article written by Terry Marin, starts with a change in blood pressure and the heart rate both drop and return to a healthier state. The altered blood pressure and heart rate will raise the chance of having a heart attack. As quickly as the first few days of quitting the chances of having a heart attack due to smoking are decreased. The receptors that help in the process of smell and taste will begin the recovery process as well. After two weeks have passed our circulation and breathing start to become more regulated. Breathing becomes less of a task for the body to process. After nine months has past then the cravings and irritability would have died down. People who quit smoking could start to feel like there’s little to no improvement at this point which could lead to them turning back to smoking. After a year, the person’s chance of having a stroke or a heart attack are decreased as well as their chances of getting lung cancer. Another thing people may notice after they quit smoking is weight gain. Exercise can help with weight gained prevent the person from gaining any more excess weight.

This drawing is a picture of how our lungs look before someone starts smoking. The muscle tissue is strong and flexible, and the esophagus lining is not damaged. The lungs in the picture does not show a difference in size, however smoking can also damage the growth of the lungs if one chooses to start smoking as a teen or at an age before the lungs are fully grown. The lungs on the right are a pair of smoker’s lungs with years of long-term damage. The darker tint is from the cigarette smoke being inhaled into the lungs after years of smoking. Tar filled lungs is another cause of the black appearance spread throughout the lobes of the lungs. The tissue of the esophagus is another part of the respiratory system that is affected by smoking. The lining on the walls of the esophagus become weak. The labels on the lungs are pointing out the visible changes in the lungs from smoking over a long period of time.

**Citations**

1. Martin, Terry. “How Your Body Heals After You Quit Smoking.” Verywell Mind, Verywell Mind, 3 Apr. 2020, [www.verywellmind.com/after-the-last-cigarette-how-your-body-heals-2824388](http://www.verywellmind.com/after-the-last-cigarette-how-your-body-heals-2824388).
2. “Quitting Smoking.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 18 Nov. 2019, [www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\_statistics/fact\_sheets/cessation/quitting/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/cessation/quitting/index.htm).
3. Willemse, B.W.M., et al. “The Impact of Smoking Cessation on Respiratory Symptoms, Lung Function, Airway Hyperresponsiveness and Inflammation.” European Respiratory Society, European Respiratory Society, 1 Mar. 2004, erj.ersjournals.com/content/23/3/464.