

Information on smoking, HPV and cervical cancer

We know that quitting smoking can be hard. We have a team to help you to quit. If you are unsure that you're ready to quit, you can talk to us for advice. There is a link between smoking and cervical cancer. We will explain this link below.

The HPV (human papillomavirus) is a virus that causes most cervical cancers.

- Most people will get a HPV virus during their lives as there are over 100 different types of the virus.
- For most of us, HPV goes away on its own, within 1 to 2 years, and doesn't cause any harm.
- You can have HPV and not have any symptoms. Our immune system can naturally clear the virus from our body. For some of us, the virus will remain (called persistent HPV). Certain types of persistent HPV can cause changes to the cells in your cervix. These changes could develop into cervical cancer if they are not treated.
- Regular cervical screening can help find HPV and any abnormal cells that could develop into cancer.
- Regular screening also increases the chance of finding cervical cancer early.
- You can get HPV through any kind of close skin-to-skin sexual contact with any person, even if you've only had one partner. You can also have HPV if you're not currently sexually active.

What is the link between HPV and smoking?

We know from the evidence that:

- there are harmful chemicals in cigarettes that can weaken your immune system.
- smoking makes it harder for your immune system to clear a HPV infection.
- smoking increases the risk of the virus remaining in your body (persistent HPV).

Quitting smoking reduces the risk of a HPV infection.

- You are more likely to get HPV, develop abnormal cell changes in the cervix and cervical cancer.
- Your risk of cervical cancer continues to reduce long after you have stopped smoking.

Quitting smoking also helps people who have cervical cancer.

If you have cervical cancer, quitting smoking can improve the effectiveness of your treatment.

We can help you to quit smoking. If you want to quit smoking, getting the right help can double your chances of success.

The colposcopy clinic you are attending will refer you to Quit smoking services.

You can sign up for a free, personalised Quit plan to help you stop smoking.

You decide how you want your plan to work and can get:

- daily support by email and text message
- a Quit account to track your progress
- 1-to-1 support from a trained advisor
- tips from people who've successfully stopped smoking.
- free nicotine replacement medication to help manage your nicotine withdrawal.



You can get free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) to help you on your quit journey, from your stop smoking advisor. There are different types and strengths of NRT. Your advisor can help you find the type that's best for you.

You choose the support you want.

I want to stop smoking. What should I do now?

When you are ready, the HSE QUIT team are available to help you quit smoking in a non-judgemental and supportive environment.

- **Freephone 1800 201 203**
- **Freetext QUIT to 50100**
- **Twitter: @HSEQuitTeam**
- **Facebook: You Can Quit**
- **To find your nearest stop smoking clinic, go to hse.ie/quitsupport**

Evidence shows that those who use stop smoking medicine and NRT in their quit attempt have double the chance of success. This means that if someone uses these aids, they are twice as likely to quit smoking successfully.

A smoker is five times more likely to stay quit if they:

- get behavioural support.
- use stop smoking medications or NRT.
- stay quit for 28 days.

How can stopping smoking improve my general health?

Stopping smoking improves your physical and mental health.

Your physical health:

- your breathing improves.
- your risk of heart and lung disease decreases.
- your risk of cancer decreases, including your risk of getting HPV infection and persistent HPV.

Your mental health:

- improves your mood.
- lowers your risk of depression, anxiety and stress.
- gives you more energy.

Please see here for information on other health benefits of stopping smoking:

hse.ie/quitbenefits

Quit Smoking:
<https://www2.hse.ie/living-well/quit-smoking/>

