



SMOKING AND HIV

**If you are HIV positive,
and a current smoker,
quitting smoking is one of
the biggest steps you can
take to stay healthy.**



**HIV
Ireland**

Smoking by Numbers

Smoking prevalence among people living with HIV in Ireland is significantly higher than that of the general population.



22% of the general population in Ireland are current smokers.¹



35% of people living with HIV in Ireland are current smokers.²



35% of men who have sex with men (MSM) in Ireland are current smokers.³



53% of MSM living with HIV in Ireland are current smokers.⁴

1 Healthy Ireland Survey 2017: Summary of Findings. Department of Health and Ipsos MRBI, 2017.

2 Smoking Behaviour among People Living with HIV and AIDS: A Sub-Group Comparison; K. Babineau, S. O'Dea, G. Courtney, L. Clancy, 2014.

3 MISI 2015: findings from the men who have sex with men internet survey. Dublin: Health Protection Surveillance Centre, 2016.

4 Ibid.

The Facts about Smoking and HIV

HIV positive people are more likely to be smokers. Cigarette smoking remains among the most detrimental health concerns facing people with HIV today. There have been several studies worldwide about the impact of smoking on people living with HIV. In summary, studies have shown the following:

- A person with HIV who consistently takes HIV medication, but smokes, is much more likely to die of a smoking-related illness than of HIV itself.
- People on HIV treatment double their risk of death by smoking.
- Smokers who are HIV positive lose more years of life from smoking, than from HIV.
- Smoking when you have HIV makes you more likely to get other serious illnesses, including heart disease, respiratory illnesses, and cancers.
- The rate of heart attacks among smokers with HIV is three times higher than that of smokers who do not have HIV.
- For HIV positive people, smoking is 10 times more life-threatening than HIV itself.
- Smoking has a far greater impact on the prognosis of HIV positive people in the developed world than any HIV-related illnesses.
- HIV positive people who smoke are more likely to get HIV-related infections such as thrush or pneumonia.

The Health Benefits of Quitting

Better treatment options in recent years have changed the long-term outlook for people with HIV. If you are HIV positive, and a smoker, quitting is one of the biggest steps you can take to stay healthy and increase your life expectancy. There are many benefits for people living with HIV who quit smoking, including:

- A better quality of life and fewer HIV-related symptoms.
- Decreased risk of serious illnesses such as heart disease, cancers, bronchitis and pneumonia.
- Higher levels of vitamins and minerals in the body, like Vitamins C, D and E, which help fight off infections and illnesses.
- Increased blood flow and increased oxygen to the body, which makes it harder for HIV to thrive.
- Improved skin health and appearance.

Smoking and Stress

For some people, being HIV positive can lead to stress, anxiety, or depression.

You may find that smoking helps you to relax, temporarily, and often it is the fall in nicotine levels that can cause you to feel stressed.

If you are thinking about quitting, make a plan that involves other ways of dealing with stress that do not include smoking, for example exercising, listening to music, or starting a new hobby.

There's no 'right' way to quit, and there is plenty of help and support available. All QUIT support services will address your concerns about managing stress and help you develop alternative coping skills that suit you.

Help and Support

Smoking is an addiction and quitting is not easy, but there has never been more support available to increase successful quit attempts. You are twice as likely to quit successfully if you get help and support.

If you are thinking about quitting, or want to quit, there are several things you can do:

Talk to a Healthcare provider: your GP, pharmacist or someone at your HIV clinic may be able to give you advice and support.

Get a Quit Kit: order one for free at www.quit.ie. It has loads of useful information to help you prepare to quit.

Join the HSE QUIT programme: Free Phone 1800 201 203 or Free Text QUIT to 50100.

Follow www.facebook.com/HSEquit: where you'll find a large community of friendly and supportive people who have already quit and are quitting.

Visit www.quit.ie: to get contact details for Stop Smoking courses or groups.



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