

### Street name

Fags, smokes, ciggies, cigs, durries, rollies, cancer sticks.

### What is it?

Tobacco is a stimulant drug made from the dried leaves of the tobacco plant. It is sold as manufactured cigarettes or loose tobacco. Tobacco smoke contains approximately 7,000 chemicals, of which 69 are known to cause cancer. The ingredient in tobacco that makes it highly addictive is nicotine which releases a 'feel good' chemical in your brain called dopamine.

### How is it usually taken?

Most people who use tobacco smoke it in cigarettes, pipes or cigars. Tobacco can also be snorted in the form of a powder (snuf) and it can also be chewed. Since 2010, e-cigarettes have grown in popularity around the world. This involves people inhaling nicotine vapour rather than cigarette smoke. The latest data suggests that a third of Australian smokers have tried e-cigarettes.

### Immediate effects

Within seconds of inhaling tobacco people begin to feel its effects. This is because nicotine is quickly absorbed into the bloodstream where it reaches the brain, heart and other organs.

The short-term effects can include:

- A feeling of stimulation and alertness
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Acid in the stomach
- Nausea and watery eyes
- A weakened sense of taste and smell
- Reduced appetite
- Reduced muscle tension, leading to a feeling of relaxation

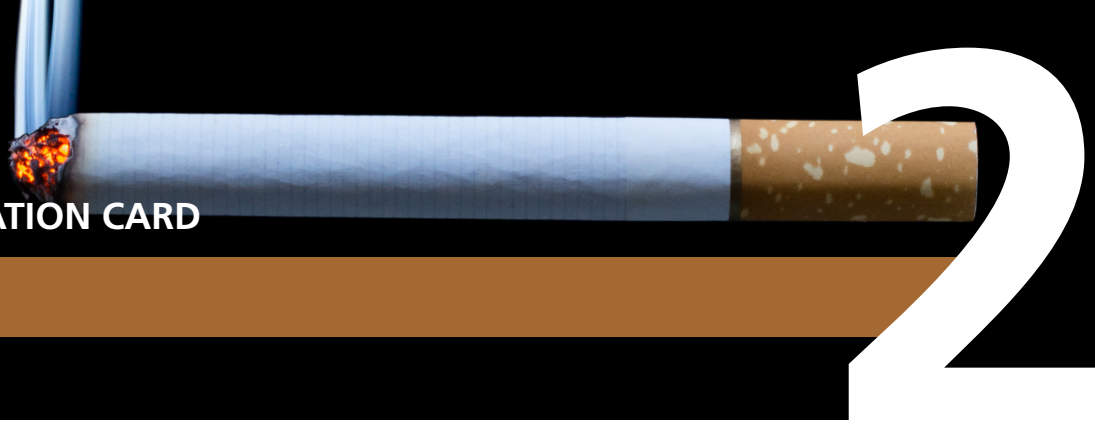
### Long-term effects

Tobacco smoking harms almost every part of your body. It also increases your risk of developing at least 16 cancers including lung, mouth, throat, lips, larynx, oesophagus, bowel, kidney and bladder. Over the long term, smoking can:

- Cause diseases of the airways such as emphysema, chronic bronchitis and chronic obstructive lung disease
- Increase the risk of heart attack, stroke, peripheral artery, and other circulatory diseases (i.e. gangrene)
- Worsens conditions such as hay fever, asthma, runny nose and inflammation in the nose
- Reduce fertility in men (impotence) and women (miscarriages)
- Cause blindness from macular degeneration and cataracts
- Accelerates ageing of the skin, delays wound healing, and contribute to osteoporosis (brittle bones)

### Mixing tobacco with other drugs

Combining alcohol and tobacco together can increase the risk of developing oral, pharyngeal and laryngeal cancer. There is no evidence that other drugs increase the damaging effects of tobacco.



### Other things to consider

- 1 in 5 cancer deaths are due to smoking
- Approximately two thirds of long-term smokers will die of a smoking-related disease
- On average long-term smokers will cut their life short by about 10 years compared to non-smokers
- While nicotine is what keeps people smoking, it is the tar and carbon monoxide in cigarettes that often kills them
- Shisha (hubbly-bubbly) smoke contains large amounts nicotine, carbon monoxide, tar and other toxins –a typical Shisha pipe session of 1 hour is equivalent of 100 cigarettes in lung damage

### Harm reduction advice

Every cigarette causes damage to the body which is why many experts traditionally have not supported harm reduction messages for smoking. Tobacco harm reduction refers to switching to a less harmful nicotine product to reduce health risks.

Some simple harm reduction messages include:

- Use a patch or other nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) i.e. gum, inhaler, lozenges, to cut down
- Try bupropion or varenicline if NRT is unsuccessful
- NRT advised for pregnant women who smoke > 5 cigarettes per day
- Smoke less to reduce harm
- Electronic cigarettes, Swedish snus, cause less harm than cigarettes
- There are other benefits to working on cutting down - it can build a person's confidence that they may be able to quit and can motivate them to have a go

While there is insufficient evidence to support claims that e-cigarettes are safe in the short and long term, many experts believe they cause less harm than smoking tobacco.